

Todd Gitlin on the meaning of Chicago'68

September 2-15, 1996

# IN THESE TIMES

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on  
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&  
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on  
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# EDITORIAL

## DOLE ADRIFT

**D**uring his appearance at the Republican National Convention, Bob Dole remarked that he was surprised not to see Bill Clinton present as a delegate. Perhaps because it was vintage Dole—and because it rang true—it was the best line in an ultimately sad attempt to transform himself into a moderate. It would be too much to expect Clinton to reciprocate in his speech to the Democratic convention. There are, after all, some real differences—mandated by their respective core constituencies—between the two candidates. Dole's espousal of an across-the-board 15 percent tax cut—and of its theoretical justification, supply-side economics—clearly separates him from Clinton. Yet his electoral change of heart from deficit reduction to tax cutting exemplifies the hollowness of character and willingness to abandon long-articulated principles that both men share. Nor is it just Dole who has developed a case of Clintonitis. Jack Kemp, that alleged pillar of intellectual consistency, fell over himself in a rush to abandon his long-held support for affirmative action and immigrant rights, just so that he could conform to Dole's beliefs on these issues. So much for the party of inclusion.

Presidential conventions are, of course, no longer places where candidates contest for their party's nomination or where different groups within the party discuss program and policy. Since the nominating reforms of 1972, they have come more and more to resemble TV shows, and none has ever been more tightly choreographed than this one. This was a convention at which only one in 40 delegates was African-American, at which one delegate in four was a millionaire and for which the Christian Coalition wrote the platform planks on social issues. Yet on the TV screen black delegates seemed to be everywhere and the major opening speech was by Colin Powell, a black retired general who favors affirmative action. Similarly, although the party platform is stridently anti-abortion, the issue was hardly mentioned on screen and the leading woman speaker, Rep. Susan Molinari of New York, was chosen because she is pro-choice.

Like the convention as a whole, Dole's speech was filled with empty platitudes, begged questions and near-moronic sound bites. In talking about crime, for example, Dole said that "we are a nation paralyzed by crime, and it is time to

end that." To do so, he went on, "I mean to attack the root of the cause of crime—criminals." He might just as well have said that he intended to stop floods by attacking their root cause—water, which descends on us, like criminals, by an act of God.

Dole said the Republicans were the party that trusts the people. "I trust in the people," he said. "That is the heart of all that I have said to you tonight." He evidently didn't, however, trust the TV audience to hear any discussion of the party platform, or to see or hear the most active core constituents who were unhappy with their treatment at the convention. In fact, he wouldn't even let his host, Pete Wilson, speak, for fear the pro-choice governor of California might so outrage Christian delegates that an open debate on abortion would be unavoidable and the illusion of unity destroyed.

*The most tightly  
choreographed  
nominating  
convention ever  
won't do much  
for a candidate  
who lacks both  
program and  
principle.*

Attacking his opponents was easier for Dole than articulating a program, though even in his attacks he remained vaguely abstract. The Democratic administration, he said, "has been unwilling to risk the truth, to speak without calculation, to sacrifice itself." The real issue, he insisted, is not "the economy, stupid," as the victors said four years ago, but "the kind of nation we are." And what kind of nation are we? One, he said, whose "triumph" lies "not in its material wealth, but in courage, sacrifice and honor." For the most part, that was about as specific as it got.

Not to worry, the delegates really liked what content the speech did have: Dole's reprise of the 1982 Reagan tax cuts that had made many of them millionaires. They hailed the speech as a great success, as did the usual right-wing pundits.

The TV audience, on the other hand, seems to have been less enthralled. CBS and ABC carried Dole's speech. NBC, which carried "Seinfeld" instead, garnered ratings double those of the other two networks combined. And post-convention polling and interviews indicate that most Americans either think the tax cuts are a bad idea, or simply distrust the promise that they will be made.

In short, despite Dole's effort to present his party and his tax cut as people-friendly, his convention bounce will probably be short-lived and his prospects remain poor. ◀

# IN THESE TIMES

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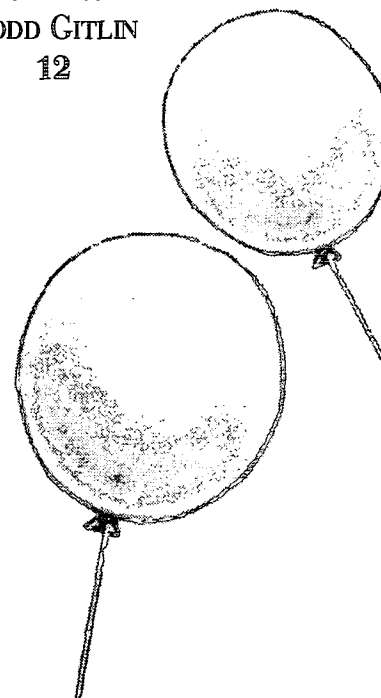
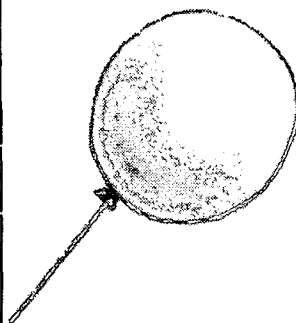
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TODD GITLIN  
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## LETTERS

## Toothless laws and low wages

G. Pascal Zachary ("Beyond the minimum wage," August 5) is absolutely correct in claiming that union membership growth is essential to a "high-wage economy." A study by the AFL-CIO Public Employee Department demonstrates that the single most valuable factor in raising wages for the "working poor" is union membership. Greater than experience and education as factors, union membership is worth as much as 20 percent of the total hourly rate. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of union organizers and the willingness of low-paid workers to respond, only 6 percent of the working poor are currently protected by collective bargaining agreements. The frustrating story of the Case Farms poultry workers in North Carolina can be repeated time and again throughout the country. Vicious retaliation by employers, ineffectively checked by toothless labor laws,

accounts for the failure of the working poor to organize.

"Living wage" advocates may be helpful in this regard. As we press local governments to require that their contractors pay a decent wage, contractors ought also to commit themselves to neutrality when their employees are considering whether to unionize. After all, public employers generally adopt such a neutral stance when their own employees decide to organize under existing state bargaining laws.

Al Bilik  
President

Public Employee Department  
AFL-CIO  
Washington, D.C.

## Teen smoking

Mike Males' campaign to stop the "scapegoating" of youth, and to blame the elderly for child poverty and much else, becomes more transparent in "Gotta match?" (August 5). His state-

ment that "more than 80 percent of teenagers don't smoke" can be interpreted in any number of ways, except the one it is designed to obscure: Smoking is increasing, not decreasing, among teenagers. The Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report in their 1996 survey that 34.8 percent of people 17 and younger now smoke, up from 27.5 percent in 1991.

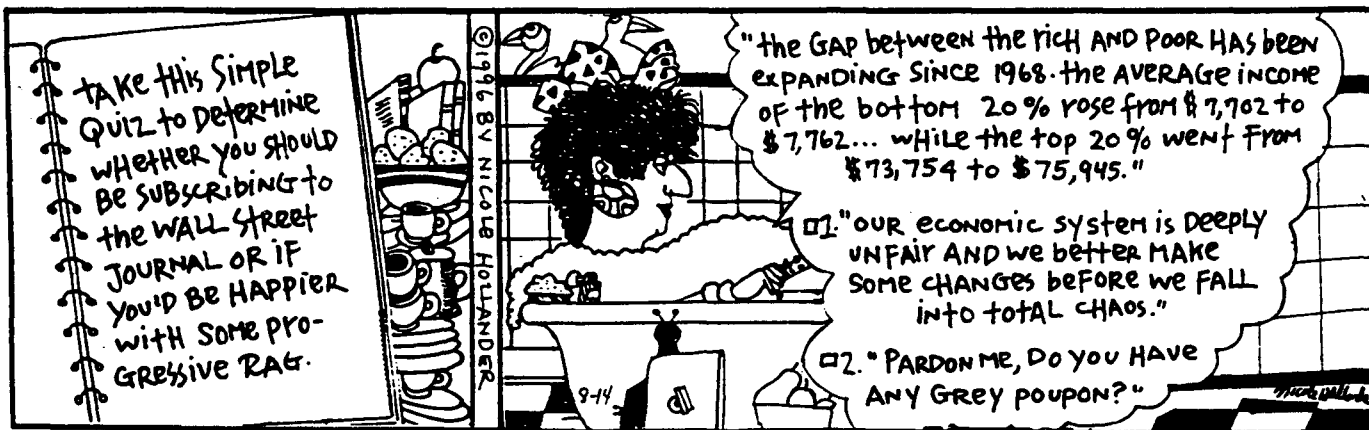
For Males, Clinton's "stratagem" of "protecting kids from tobacco" is an ineffective diversion, merely a way of avoiding a head-on fight with the tobacco industry. This is, charitably, a half-truth. The tobacco industry targets teenagers in a variety of ways, and it is extraordinary to see an ITT contributor implying that the industry is wasting its dollars and energies.

Males claims that "there is little reason to believe that teens are more vulnerable than adults to [tobacco] industry promotions," because "adolescents calculate risks just like adults do." This begs the question of how vulnerable the general population is to tobacco advertising. We all calculate risks—within constraints shaped by age, experience and social environment. It is hardly scapegoating to observe that teenagers, like any of us, are susceptible to cleverly crafted advertising strategies devised by the best talent money can buy. Males would do well to ponder the gospel according to Ed Rollins: "You can fool all the people all the time if the advertising budget is big enough."

Richard B. Du Boff  
Haverford, Pa.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander





## Implicit agenda

Near the end of "A weak read" (August 5), Tom Frank remarks that *The Weekly Standard* "isn't advancing a coherent position as much as it's giving its demographic exactly the cultural fantasies it wants: pointless epiphanies about the 'gravitas' of George Washington," etc.

But Frank's thematic reading of what's printed on the pages of the *Standard* was a little too cute for its own good, I'm afraid, and missed the whole point of the project. The *Standard*'s politics are unmistakable, as was plainly evident last year, when Murdoch's News Corp. anted up several million dollars to attract a lot of reliable right-wing talent and thereby created the publishing vehicle in question. With that kind of capital sloshing around in petty cash, News Corp. was able to secure immediate recognition for the *Standard*, greatly enhancing the profile of its chief editor, William Kristol, now one of the Beltway's more visible commentators.

News Corp. was able to launch yet another right-wing weekly with a circulation topping 63,000 copies, and thus buy instant credibility for the product, especially among corporate advertisers, who regularly beat down the *Standard*'s door to be allowed onto its pages. This is politics enough in my book. Money politics, that is. The kind of ageless politics that might be called The Old Consequence, in which the purpose of commentary is to hew out some viable positions, as long as they're right-wing.

The last issue of the *Standard* that I saw happened to carry subscription cards whose sales pitch was a list of the "Top 10 Reasons To Subscribe Now!" One through 10, each reason began with the name CLINTON printed in bold caps.

Robert Bonner  
Chicago

## Save the ecosystem

Red-legged frogs? Spotted owls? I can't get excited by the sort of analysis offered by Will Nixon in "Too little, too late" (July 8). Defending little bits

well-suited to reforestation, as a permanent resource? This would provide a lasting source of wood products and forest-related jobs, provide refuge for many rare critters and wildlife in general, and reduce soil erosion, flash floods, river and reservoir siltation, etc. It would mean no more clear-cutting.

How many more disasters do we need out on our prairies and grasslands before we wise up? Overgrazing and the overconsumption of water (with deeper wells needed all the time) are ruining these regions. The future for farmers and ranchers in areas prone to drought doesn't look bright. Political opposition to an ecologically systemic approach to environmental problems will be fierce. In addition, the general public has been poorly educated about U.S. geography (or that of any other part of the world). A major educational effort is needed. As for specifics, I'm neither an environmental activist, a lawyer nor an administrator of regulations (where common sense is often sadly lacking): I'm just a retired geographer, hoping others see the big picture and don't get bogged down in minuscule matters.

Laurence G. Wolf  
Cincinnati

## Query

For a book on the uses of music in social movements (co-authored with Dick Flacks of UC Santa Barbara), I would like to hear thoughts and stories about how music (defined as broadly as you would like) has contributed to readers' political development and experiences.

Write to: Rob Rosenthal, Department of Sociology, Wesleyan University, CT 06459-0012. Or send e-mail to: rrosenthal@wesleyan.edu.

Rob Rosenthal  
Middletown, Conn.

of our environment, or this or that rare species is not the way to solve our environmental problems.

We need national ecosystem policies. How about a nationwide policy that treats our forests, as well as lands

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. If possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

# InSHORT



## CAUCASIAN SCAPEGOATS

The 20-month-old war in Chechnya has brought urban terrorism to Russia for the first time. Three terrorist bomb attacks on Moscow public transport in June and July left four people dead and 33 injured. Though no one has claimed responsibility, authorities have been quick to blame separatist rebels from the

Caucasus republic of Chechnya. Some 25,000 interior ministry troops were brought into Moscow in July to bolster the regular police and carry out a special security sweep of the city, which has been code-named "Operation Regime."

But Russian human rights workers charge that police are using the

Draconian security regime as a pretext for a brutal, racially motivated campaign against Moscow's large minority of dark-skinned Caucasian residents, refugees, traders and itinerant workers.

"During the now-frequent 'anti-crime' raids on marketplaces, where many Caucasians sell fruit and vegetables, masked policemen frisk, beat

and arrest innocent people on the slightest suspicion," reports the daily *Izvestia*. "Unofficial medical sources say that each day at least three Caucasians are admitted by hospitals and first-aid centers to treat injuries brought on by police beatings. Every day, some 1,500 Caucasians are picked off from Moscow sidewalks and taken to police stations for identification and passport control. If they have no residence

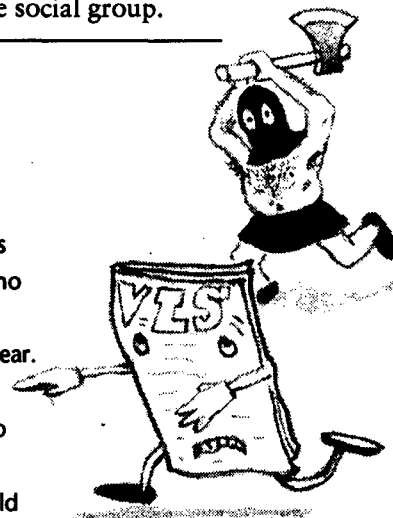
permits, they are put on trains and deported."

Last year, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki issued a scathing report that identified racist street crackdowns in Moscow and other Russian cities as a "state-sponsored policy" that unjustly victimizes an entire social group.

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## VLS under the ax

LAST APRIL, WHEN THE *VILLAGE VOICE*'S PUBLISHER BEGAN DISTRIBUTING THE PAPER FREE IN Manhattan, sympathetic observers decried its increasing submission to the bottom line, while the less charitable spoke of its slide into mediocrity. Last month's decision to cut back the publishing schedule of *VLS*, the *Voice*'s well respected literary supplement, has only fed such criticism. After its September issue, the *VLS* will become a quarterly (it currently appears 10 times a year). In a memo circulated to employees in early August, *Voice* President David Schneiderman characterized the move as a "business decision" motivated by the *VLS*'s financial losses of more than \$100,000 a year. The new quarterly, Schneiderman announced, will be expanded, and the weekly *Voice* will now double its book review section to two pages. Many at the *Voice* fear that the move is a prelude to getting rid of the *VLS* altogether. In fact, according to insiders, that was Schneiderman's original plan. Only the protests of *Voice* Editor in Chief Karen Durbin, who argued that such a move would look bad, saved the *VLS* as a quarterly. —Dave Mulcahey



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# APPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES



By David Futrelle

## Death and stuff 9.1

Don't anyone ever say that pop singer Mariah Carey is unconcerned with the serious questions of the day. In a recent interview on the World Entertainment News Network, she offered her unique take on the issue of world hunger: "When I watch TV and I see those

poor, starving kids all over the world, I can't help but cry," the singer explained. "I mean, I'd love to be skinny like that, but not with all those flies and death and stuff."



## Lighter shade of pale 6.7

Though the networks managed to find a few black faces to cut in the crowd during Colin Powell's speech on opening night at the Republican convention, non-white conventioners were few and far between in San Diego. According to a survey by the Associated Press, there

were fewer women and minorities among Republican convention delegates this year than in 1992. Ninety-seven percent of the delegates this year were white, and a number of state delegations were completely white. But many delegates seemed willing to take the monochrome nature of the convention in stride. "We've got lots of diversity," the *Chicago Tribune* reported one Iowa delegate as saying. "We've got evangelicals and we've got fundamentalists."

## Whiter than white 8.2

Pat Buchanan may have found himself temporarily muzzled at the Republican convention in San Diego, but he's still got supporters on the World Wide Web. In an essay found on the neo-Nazi Stormfront White Nationalist Web site, Don Black describes Buchanan's message as "a refreshing alternative to the 'mainstream' media's usual drivel." Still, Black has a few reservations: "Is

he a White Nationalist?" Black asks. "Well ... not exactly. ... He apparently doesn't fully appreciate the central importance of race in the 'culture war' he talks about. His sister Bay seems to be even more oblivious to the concept of race, and she seems to be a major influence on her brother." Still, Black concludes, Buchanan deserves the support of Mr. and Mrs. White America. "He will make White Americans more aware of the real issues and of their real enemies," Black maintains, "and he will pave the way for other, more racially oriented candidates at all levels."

## Appall-O-Meter Scale:

1. Ricki Lake Effect
2. Waterworldly
3. CK Be Bad
4. Dick Enberg Momentous
5. Tesh-esque
6. Molinari mush
7. Suharto heartless
8. Limbaugh low
9. Ralph Reed-iculous
10. Unabombastic

*Stunned by a stupid statement? Naused by a noxious news story? Contact the Appall-O-Meter, c/o In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago IL, 60647. Please enclose a copy of the appalling item.*

it—a process which can take between several hours and several weeks, and which is usually accompanied by threats and intimidating and degrading treatment by the detaining officers. Typically, no receipt of payment of the fine is given and no charges are lodged."

A relatively new regulation, which requires even short-term visitors to Moscow to register with the police, has greatly increased the powers of police to stop, search and detain people on the streets.

"It's very expensive to get registered, and it can take almost a day to go through the bureaucratic procedures," says Kiril Kharitov, a 50-year-old vegetable vendor who shuttles regularly between his native republic of Daghestan and Moscow. "You are supposed to register within a day of arriving in the city. Any violation of the regime can get you beaten up or arrested. Basically, it just costs money. When a policeman says 'show me your documents,' it means 'give me money.'"

Human rights groups say they have run up against a blank wall of official denial and public indifference in their efforts to confront the problem. "What this shows is that anyone who faces the police on our streets today is utterly helpless," says Boris Altschuler, head of the independent Moscow Human Rights Center. "We must stand up against this, because if they can do it to Caucasians today, they can do it to everyone tomorrow."

—Fred Weir

"Typically, police or traffic patrol officers stop a young, dark-skinned male on the street or in the metro, and ask him to present documents that prove he is in Moscow legally," notes the report, which is based on hundreds of cases. "If the person has no such documents on him, and very often even if he does, he is made to

come to the police station. There or on the way, the police intimidate, insult and often beat the detainee until he pays a fine for an alleged violation of the residence system or other infraction. If the detainee does not produce enough money, he is often locked in a cell until he can bring in a relative or friend to pay

# PERISHING PESTICIDES

In early August, President Clinton signed the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, overhauling national pesticide laws that hadn't been revised in decades. Several environmental groups hailed the new law as a

triumph for public health, a remarkable turnaround for a Republican Congress eager to repair its environmental image. But others saw it as a troubling retreat in the war on cancer. Critics view the new law as an act of political expediency that may give pesticide manufacturers even more leeway than they have today.

At the heart of the dispute is the Delaney clause, a rule adopted in 1958 that banned any carcinogenic food additives that concentrate in processed foods. For years, the Environmental Protection Agency ignored the clause in setting pesticide residue standards, claiming that residues aren't additives. In 1993, however, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) won a court case that finally forced the EPA to implement the rule. The agency took some preliminary steps against some carcinogenic pesticides in 1993 and was preparing to reach final decisions on them. But the Food Quality Protection Act repealed the Delaney clause.

Under the new law, the EPA must use the same standard for raw and processed foods, "a reasonable certainty of no harm." For cancer, which has been the main focus of pesticide rules in the past, the standard has generally been interpreted

to mean a risk of, at most, one in a million. Now a similar level of scrutiny will be applied to other threats to the reproductive, immune, hormonal and nervous systems. The EPA will also calculate new standards for pesticide residues by taking into account some important factors that it may have ignored in the past. For example, the agency previously assumed that people would be exposed to a pesticide only from one food at a time, whereas in fact they may also be exposed to the same chemical from other foods, tap water or lawn chemicals. The Food Quality Protection Act also pays particular attention to children, enacting recommendations from a 1993 National Academy of Sciences report that found that babies and infants, with bodies and diets different from those of adults, face much greater risks from pesticides.

Richard Wiles of the Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization Environmental Working Group says that the loss of the Delaney clause means less than one might think. Its peculiar wording limited the rule to special situations. In fact, according to Wiles, processing food usually degrades pesticides; only in rare cases do residues concentrate in the fin-

ished product. Of some 7,000 residue standards established by the EPA, he says, the Delaney clause would apply in perhaps 80 cases.

Others haven't taken the loss of the Delaney clause so lightly. To be sure, the rule was never fully enforced, and it covered only dozens among thousands of pesticide applications directly. But Jay Feldman, head of the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides, believes that the clause would have had a powerful impact if the EPA had really applied it under the settlement with NRDC. He finds other troubling provisions in the new law as well. In the past, the phaseout of notorious pesticides such as DDT and Alar always began with tough state laws that forced the federal government to act. But now, states will find it very difficult to set residue standards stricter than the EPA's, a provision that the pesticide manufacturers have wanted from Congress for a decade.

Time will tell if the new law proves to be a triumph or a travesty. "The major [environmental] groups consider it a victory that they have taken a bad Republican bill and negotiated it to a much better bill," Feldman says. "But measured against what ought to be happening to bring down cancer rates, we haven't made much progress."

Al Meyerhoff, a senior attorney with the NRDC, demurs. "The truth is that both sides blinked on the Delaney clause," he says. "No one knows how many chemicals it would have banned in the next ten years. But because the industry wanted to get out of it, we think that the industry was willing to swallow a bitter pill with this law."

—Deldre McFadyen

—Will Nixon

## DOTH HE PROTEST TOO MUCH?

TO ENSURE THAT NO ONE WOULD DISRUPT THE CAREFULLY STAGED AND MANAGED DEMOCRATIC National Convention, the city of Chicago and the Democratic National Committee decreed the twelve-block area surrounding the convention hall off-limits to demonstrations. Protesters were to be restricted to a parking lot 600 feet away—a safe distance from the main action. Only those lucky groups selected by lottery would have access to the parking lot's stage and sound system.

The Illinois branch of the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court against the city of Chicago in July on behalf of Dr. Quentin Young, the national coordinator of Physicians for a National Health Program, who wanted to organize a 24-hour sidewalk vigil at the United Center entrance during the convention. The ACLU argued that the restrictions violated the First Amendment rights of the protesters.

The court ruled that free speech does extend beyond the perimeter of the designated "protest pit." It ordered the city to allow at least 20 people at a time the opportunity to deliver their messages at a fixed spot near the entrance. "The judge made the right decision in recognizing that security can never be a mask for destroying constitutional liberty," says Young. "The ruling permits real discourse, something that was singularly absent at the Republican convention in San Diego."



# MEDIA WATCH

BY THOMAS GOETZ

## Sleepy in San Diego

Covering the media covering the Republican National Convention in San Diego is a little like watching a documentary on the making of *A Very Brady Sequel*: It's a long way from the source, and the source wasn't much to begin with. The Republican Party shindig was all meta without meaning, and the more you try to step back and get some perspective on the convention show itself, the less any of it makes sense.

Nowhere was this more true than in the bickering among the Republican National Convention and the networks over who was covering what speeches and what speeches were worth covering. When ABC skipped George Bush's speech on Monday, the GOP was furious, even though the other networks carried it. As with conventions past, the Republicans had every utterance pre-planned—during New York Rep. Susan Molinari's keynote speech on Tuesday, you could see guys with ear-pieces trying to quiet the crowd when they had the gall to burst into unscripted laughter.

Given such übermanagement, it's no surprise that ABC's Ted Koppel pulled up *Nightline* and left town two days ahead of schedule. Again the GOP was incensed that the media would fail to appreciate its spectacle—"Koppel Cops Out of San Diego" read the headline in a Media Research Center newsletter, which concluded that "such is the sad state of American journalism." Thankfully, the GOP had prepared itself for just such slights by crafting its own coverage on GOPTV, a pseudo-network broadcast on Pat Robertson's Family

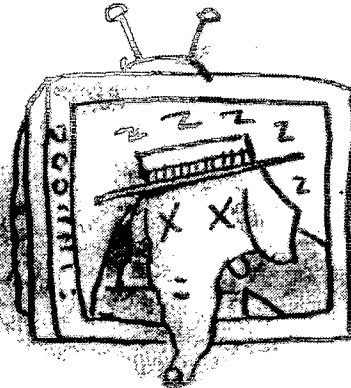
Channel and staffed by reporters-turned-congressmen like Texas Rep. Henry Bonilla.

## No laughing matter

Sidney Blumenthal, reporter for *The New Yorker*, was exchanging jokes with some acquaintances at the Marriott bar about how Dole could save his campaign. "Maybe Dole should drop dead," Blumenthal said. "That's the best thing he can do for the party." The gathered reporters chuckled, but a nearby delegate wasn't nearly so amused. Meredith Marshall, an alternate delegate from Ketchikan, Alaska, took Blumenthal's crack for a threat and summoned a nearby Capital City police officer, who summoned a San

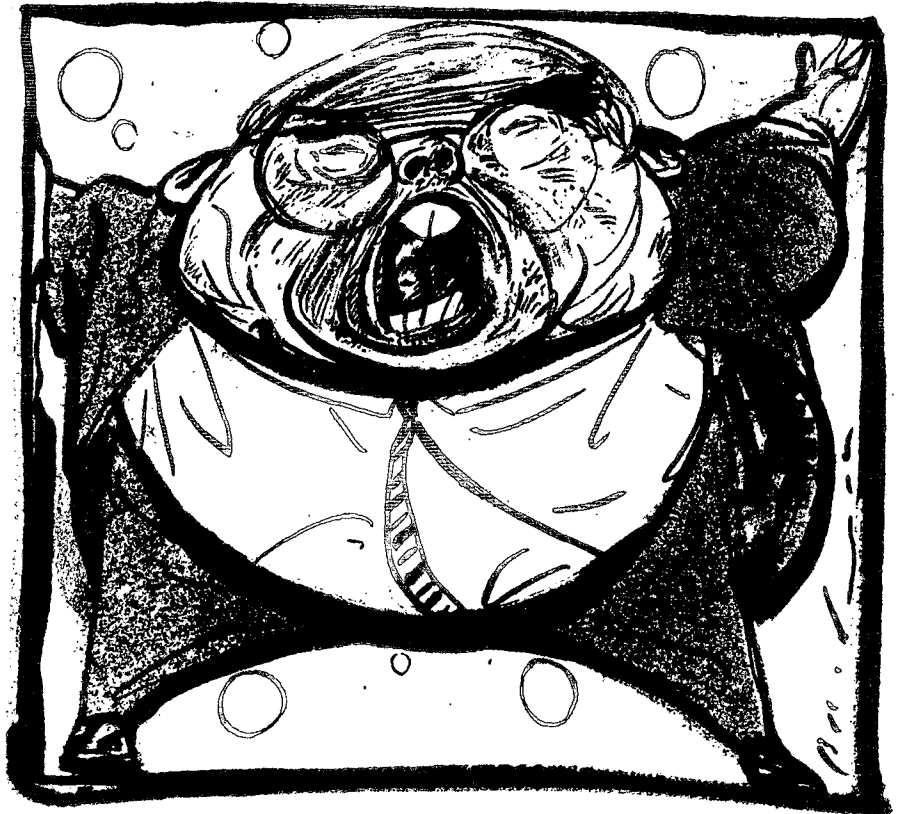
Diego officer, who summoned the Secret Service. Just like that, Blumenthal was pulled aside and grilled over the remark. As the reporter sweated and tried to explain that he meant no malice, the Alaskan woman smoked Salems and sipped a beer, oblivious to the extent of her triumph: She had not only entangled a member of the media elite, but one of Bill

Clinton's biggest boosters. But her victory was short-lived: After wielding his clout (Christopher Hitchens, Garry Wills, Hendrik Hertzberg and Jeff Greenfield were among those who came to Blumenthal's defense), the reporter was released—with a newfound appreciation for the animosity the GOP holds for the media.



TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner



GOP releases official Dole/Kemp campaign portrait

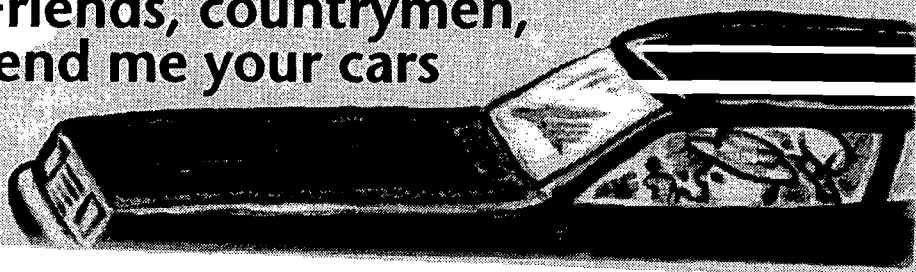
## A PINK SLIP FOR BOUTROS?

**P**resident Clinton's decision to oppose a second term for U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is clearly an attempt to prevent the Republicans from turning the Egyptian diplomat into an international version of Willie Horton for the 1996 elections. The irony is that Clinton is trying to satisfy his opponents by dumping a man who has served U.S. interests better than almost any other imaginable Southern diplomat.

Since the Reagan administration, the U.S. right has beat the drum incessantly for U.N. reform. Boutros-Ghali has largely complied, overseeing zero- and now negative-growth budgets, staff cuts, internal oversight and outside auditing, and department reshuffles that have effectively eliminated the U.N.'s voice in questions of global economics. Nonetheless, American conservatives continue to fuss about Boutros-Ghali's inadequate zeal for reform, conveniently overlooking the role the U.S. government's \$1.6 billion debt to the U.N. played in causing the world body's financial crisis in the first place.

So if not Boutros-Ghali, who? None among the oft-discussed possible successors has much of a chance of being chosen. One popular candidate is Japan's Sadako Ogata, the U.N. high commissioner for refugees, who has won deserved praise for her work at that agency. But there are problems: Japan wants a permanent seat on the Security Council, and it's unlikely the second largest contributor to the U.N. budget would get both the secretary-general's chair and a Council seat; nor would China look favorably upon giving its ancient rival that much power. Two other frequently mentioned candidates are President Mary Robinson of Ireland and Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of

## Friends, countrymen, lend me your cars



DELEGATES ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES PLEDGING THEIR SUPPORT AT THE national party conventions this year. Some of the nation's largest corporations are giving hundreds of thousands of dollars in goods and services directly to the conventions, an analysis by the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics reveals. For instance, General Motors is lending cars at no cost to the conventions. United Airlines is giving party officials hundreds of free flights. And Bay Networks Inc. of Santa Clara has given the Democratic National Convention computer equipment worth \$332,910. The corporations are taking advantage of a new loophole in Federal Election Commission rules that permits any commercial vendor to trade goods and services for "promotional considerations." "The benefits are two-fold," says GM spokesman Tom Pyden, explaining the company's generosity. "One, the conventions provide us with a terrific opportunity to showcase our high-quality products. Two, they give us a chance to interact in a casual setting with those leaders who help shape public policy about GM and our industry."

—Deidre McFadyen

Norway. As far as the U.S. right is concerned, they both have three strikes against them: they are women, Europeans and feminists.

Another short-list candidate is Kofi Annan, the undersecretary-general for peace-keeping operations. A Ghanaian, he is, after Boutros-Ghali, the highest-ranking African at the U.N. If he's interested in the job, he certainly cannot say so, since that would be a double betrayal—of his boss and of his continent. It's safe to say most in Washington have no idea who he is, but when it dawns on them that the candidate is a black African who runs all peacekeeping operations, he will be out of the running.

Here is some early handicapping for the selection: First, it depends on the U.S. elections, which will occur a few weeks before the Security Council seriously addresses the issue. If Clinton wins and some of the more rabid right-wingers are defeated, Clinton might change his mind and back Boutros-Ghali after all. A face-saving shorter term (one or two years) for Boutros-Ghali is another

possibility. If the United States insists on dumping the incumbent, then the search is on for a compromise candidate. Assuming the other four permanent members continue to back Boutros-Ghali, they will probably veto Washington's first choice.

While any of the Big Five can veto a Security Council decision, the General Assembly (made up of all 185 member states) officially has the final say. Usually the General Assembly rubber-stamps the council's decision, but this year might be different. The president of the General Assembly will be Ambassador Ismail Razali of Malaysia; both he and his government have harshly criticized Washington's heavy-handedness at the U.N. and Boutros-Ghali's bias in favor of the West. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad has already said he would oppose a second term for the incumbent. The most important outcome of the current dispute may be a bigger role for developing countries in the selection process.

—Jim Wurst

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# CONTRACT IN THE CAN

As corporations and municipalities across the country replace full-time employees with subcontracted, temporary and leased employees, workers are often not only left with lower wages and fewer benefits, but with formidable obstacles to workplace organization as well. Many labor leaders now acknowledge that if unions are going to thrive in the future, they will have to develop new, more effective strategies to organize the "contingent" workforce.

In what may portend future organizing success, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 100 in New Orleans recently won a union contract for temp workers at the city's waste-hauling companies. In Louisiana, as in much of the South, two of the world's largest waste disposal firms, Waste Management (WMX) and Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI), have divided up most of the residential garbage collection turf, promising cities huge budget savings and forcing out local haulers by underbidding contracts. WMX and BFI use temp agencies to supply the workers who do the heavy, back-of-the-truck work. These workers, called "hoppers," "helpers" or "chunkers," are almost exclusively African-American men, and until recently they were paid the minimum wage and received no benefits.

But last summer, these temp workers began to organize a union. Assisted by Local 100, the workers at the two temp agencies gathered enough support to force a Labor Board election and won convincingly by margins of 19-2 and 22-7. Within six months, workers at five more agencies in Lafayette, Baton Rouge and southeast Louisiana followed suit, bringing the local's organized temp workforce to more than 800 workers.

To strengthen its hand in negotiations, Local 100 set a strike deadline of July 15—in the middle of New

Orleans' hot and steamy summer, when uncollected garbage would create a stink with the power to move corporate and political mountains. As the July 15 deadline approached, the heat took its toll on garbage collection: Temp agencies found it more difficult to hire hoppers, and many walked off the job. After receiving thousands of complaints in the space of two days, city officials fined WMX \$100,000 and threatened further fines if service did not improve.

Within weeks, Local 100 signed contracts with the two major temp agencies that supply garbage workers in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. The contracts provide pay increases of up to 40 percent for some garbage workers—extraordinary for any union contract in the South. Workers in New Orleans will see their wages rise to \$65 a day, from the previous \$35-\$50 a

day. Workers also get their first paid vacation and a grievance procedure that gives them the means to fight unfair discipline or termination.

Since the contract settlement, Corporate Personnel Service and Temporaries, New Orleans' main temp agency, has kept the trucks fully staffed. But the road is not clear. WMX, aided by a union-busting law firm, led an aggressive and expensive campaign to defeat the efforts of company drivers in southwest Louisiana to organize a union with Local 100.

—Zack Nauth

## SOURCES

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## THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



**F L A S H B A C K**

# The ghost at the banquet

*At this year's  
national  
convention in  
Chicago, the  
Democrats will  
try to lay the  
spirit of '68 to  
rest. Maybe  
leftists should  
do the same.*

By Todd Gitlin

**I**n a culture where "you're history" means "you're dead," history gets smuggled into public view in the form of anniversary stories. Whole events spring into being to capitalize on free commemorative publicity. (Remember Woodstock II?) Predictable modules puff up the news. Phrases about generations, decades, defining moments zoom through mediaspace. Round up the usual metaphors. Let the calendar do the walking.

The Democratic National Convention this year in Chicago is no exception. The stock footage from '68, the last time the convention was held in the city, comes off the shelf and the pieces crank themselves out. See the fixed bayonets! Armored vehicles with barbed wire rolling down Michigan Avenue! Billy-clubs swinging! Crowds chanting, "The whole world is watching!" The bygone occasion is everything; the history out of which the occasion arose is nothing.

With history metamor-

phosing into a succession of photo-ops, the choice of a convention site is eminently political. The Republicans this year planted themselves at border's edge, as if only a rally of conservatives could hold back the immigrant hordes. And the Democrats in 1996 have planted their convention in the very city where the party ripped itself to shreds. Implicit in their choice is a prayer to put a lot of raw, awful history "behind us." Democrats of different persuasions now say that they are unafraid of that history, that they shall overcome. Mayor Richard M. Daley (son of the mayor in '68) and Tom Hayden (one of the Chicago Eight) link arms, joke together and talk the talk of reconciliation. The Democrats also chose to reimplant themselves in the city whose politics were once synonymous with the white so-called ethnic working class. The Democrats can wish.

The rupture of '68, which had as its immediate cause Lyndon Johnson's war and Hubert Humphrey's refusal to jump off his puppeteer's lap, marked the end of the New Deal coalition that amalgamated urban machines, unions, minorities and many professionals. That New Deal coalition, in uneasy alliance with Dixiecrats, made up the center of gravity in American politics for more than 30 years. Up until '68, the Democrats had taken seriously the business of presidential politics, namely the question of how to assemble majorities. They were able to contain the party's class and racial tensions under the same big top.

During the subsequent 28 years, it has been the Republicans who have (at least until recently) been serious about composing majorities. By contrast, the Democrats gambled that they could paste together racial and ethnic minorities with pro-choice women to compose a new, post-civil rights, extra-Southern majority. For the most part, they have failed. They have only been able to win the presidency when they nominate a moderate Southerner. (Indeed, the South's present-day dominance of American politics is unrivaled in the 20th century. President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott all hail from that single region.)

What Hubert Humphrey discovered to his horror when the tear gas swirled up in front of the Hilton Hotel and got into his eyes as he was showering on a sweltering August night in 1968 was that the Democrats were in the process of breaking apart in front of the cameras as the whole world proverbially watched. This breakdown occurred because the Democratic Party was blindly in thrall to a war that was tearing the country apart. Rather than see the convention rubber-stamp this disaster, a critical mass of demonstrators came to disrupt the festivities. Some were willing, some eager to riot. A larger, better-armed, equally critical mass of police was happy to oblige with a show of force. The fury of the cops, orchestrated by their officers, amounted to their version of a





Police riot, Grant Park,  
Chicago, 1968.

class manifesto—the hell with you, spoiled college brats!

Still, the collision in Chicago might have been avoided if the party establishment had tempered its power with wisdom. If only Johnson had let go of the Vietnam War, he might have managed the segue to a cross-class, cross-racial majority around a renovated New Deal. After all, the prosperity of the time would have financed a continuation of the popular cross-racial War on Poverty. Robert Kennedy might have accomplished a feat of cross-race coalition-building, had he lived. The party could have afforded to lose the white South, and might even have won back some of the George Wallaceites.

It was the atrocious war in Vietnam that the party managers could not manage. After more than three years of all-out war—precisely the “wider war” that Johnson had promised in 1964 not to seek—the bloodshed could not be finessed. Despite the fact that 80 percent of Democratic primary voters had voted for antiwar candidates, in Chicago 60 percent of the party delegates voted against a peace plank.

Had Mayor Richard J. Daley wanted to avoid a riot, he could have done so handily—by granting demonstrators permission to sleep in Lincoln Park, as they requested, and by using his huge advantage in manpower to cordon off strategic zones. No, again and again the police of the Daley machine, gleefully joined by federal provocateurs, chose to provoke the crowd, which often didn’t need much prodding to flare into stone-throwing. The thickheaded squadrons were military victors in a debacle they could ill-afford to win. Daley and Johnson made the crucial mistake of thinking that politics is a matter of brute force. They won the street battles, won the public opinion polls and lost the political war for a generation. The year 1968 was their high-water mark. As for the demonstrators, of whom this writer was one, we had the Pyrrhic victory of disrupting the convention—only to become a political minority on the margins for another generation and more. The way forward cannot

lead back into that swamp.

Today’s Democrats would like to believe they have recovered from the trauma of ’68 and reopened their tent. In the person of Bill Clinton, they speak to the professional classes who followed Gene McCarthy; the reliable African-Americans who favor affirmative action, which the administration hopes to mend and not end (though the Supreme Court seems to have other ideas); some of the white Southerners who broke away behind George Wallace but whose taste for Republicans probably doesn’t stretch all the way to Bob Dole; and fiscally conservative women offended by the Republicans’ hard line on abortion. The Republicans are certainly helping. Today’s Republicans are not as adept at lying about what they hope to do about abortion (and the

welfare state) as Richard Nixon was about the Vietnam War.

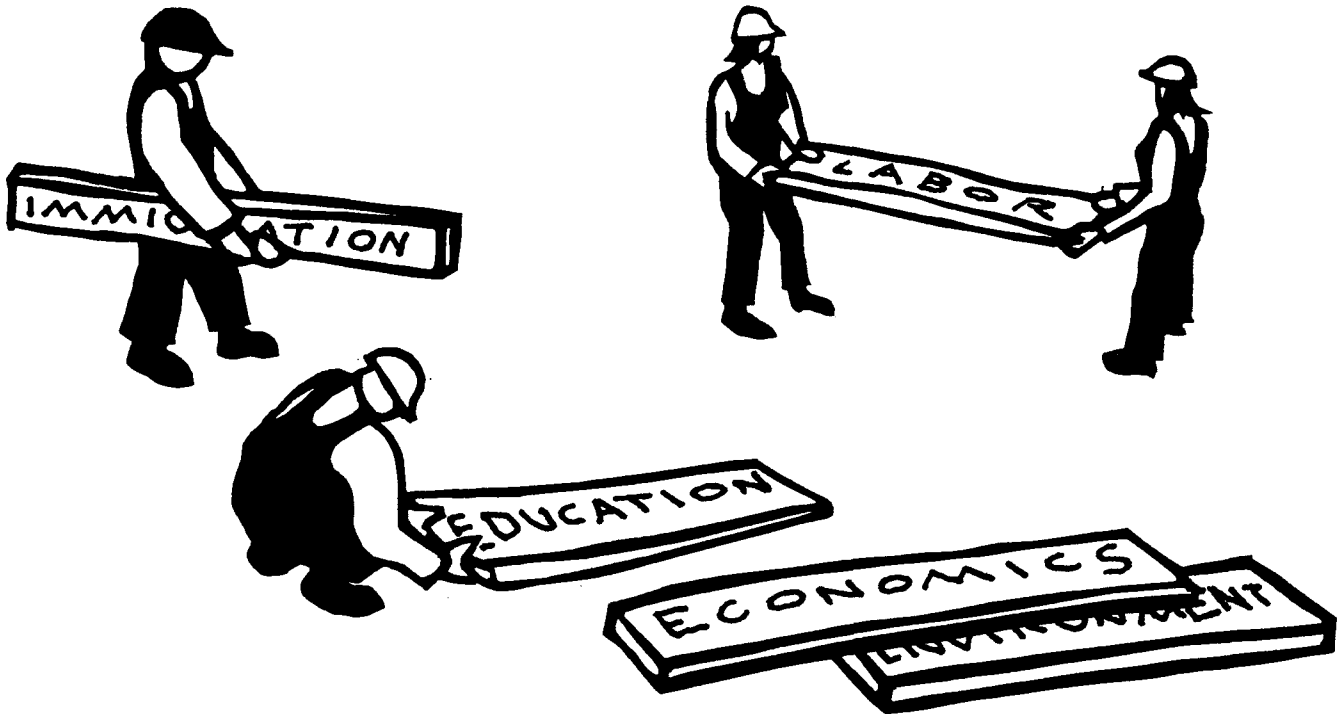
The political landscape has changed. In 1968, demonstrators would barely have known what a Republican looked like in power. If you were born during the administrations of Franklin Roosevelt or Harry Truman, Eisenhower seemed an interregnum, and Nixon to belong to the past. You took Democrats for granted and were perfectly willing to see them shred themselves. Today’s left, such as it is, has been pulverized by a generation of rollback—moral panic by the right and class warfare by the rich.

In disgust, some on the left today think that, after last month’s appalling welfare vote (in which liberal Senators John Kerry, Tom Harkin, Carl Levin and Barbara Mikulski supported Bill Clinton’s assault on decency as we know it), the lesson of ’68 is the joy of kicking out the jams and tearing the party apart. To advocate this blithely today would be to compound the tragedy of the last generation, which left both the Humphrey labor center and the McCarthy/Kennedy left deeply damaged.

At a time when a majority of voters come from the suburbs and don’t give two hoots about the fate of the poor, Bill Clinton and Al Gore have pasted together a new devitalized center whose most conspicuous claim is to be less bad than the other guys. Whatever the way out of that dead center, it will not help to celebrate the battles of yesteryear. ◀

Todd Gitlin’s latest book is *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt). He is also the author of *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Bantam). He is a professor of culture, journalism and sociology at New York University, and a columnist for the *New York Observer*.

# An alternative Democratic platform



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**T**he draft Democratic Platform advertises itself as a “moderate, achievable, common-sense agenda that will improve people’s daily lives and not increase the size of government.” It’s certainly moderate enough, and it certainly won’t increase the “big government” in Washington, which has already shrunk to its smallest size in 30 years. But it will do very little to improve people’s daily lives—and what it doesn’t do virtually assures that many lives will be further coarsened and disrupted by an economy untutored by democratic will.

“Opportunity, Responsibility, Community”—worthy, old-fashioned, focus group-approved words—are the document’s alleged organizing themes. The platform offers them for the now familiar Clinton triangulation between failed policies and utter depravity. Neoliberalism with a smirking face. Deregulation and costless cultural signaling. Trade deals for the big boys at Commerce. Food out of the mouths of those babes with parents stupid enough to be poor. “Opportunity” is mostly about education, without the resources to make it possible. “Responsibility” is mostly about crime—which we’re all against—and defense, which we all want adequately supplied. “Community” is mostly about putting V-chips in TVs and taking cigarettes out of the mouths of the young. Cities are not mentioned. Women get choice and ... well, what more could they possibly want? And on the topic of corporate violence and greed, get this precise and thundering condemnation: “Employers have a responsi-

bility to do their part as well. ... We believe that values like loyalty, fairness and responsibility are not inconsistent with the bottom line.”

Same old same old. But they’ll win in November, and we’ll be glad they did, given the alternative.

At some point, though—and now is as good a time as any—we ought to start thinking about our alternative, about what a truly progressive program for American reconstruction might be. Assume for a moment the improbable, that we had a competent vehicle to put the message out—a vastly larger New Party, a truly reformed Democratic Party or some other lowering beast still waiting to be born—what do we have to say? Properly suspicious of discussions that go nowhere, yet improperly inattentive to the need to have something to say if we’re ever going to go anywhere, progressives don’t answer this question enough.

Maybe that’s because there are no answers—something that an increasing number of progressives, in their hearts, seem to believe. To hear all the talk of the internationalization of capital, for example, you might think there is really nothing to be done short of forming a world government, which we can’t do because we can’t even organize a national one. Or to hear all the talk of racial and other differences, and the decline of working-class solidarity, you might think there could never be enough of us willing to do something together even if there was something to be done.



Or maybe progressives are hesitant to address the question because there are too many answers—too many things are screwed up, with too much interdependency in their solution—so that the impulse to start the “what is to be done” list is snuffed out by its having no clear end. Or, in a variant on this, progressives might be constrained by the idea that to act together on anything, we have to agree on everything.

None of these excuses is particularly compelling. It's true that our world is not the world of our parents. The basic structure of the economy and politics has changed in ways that defeat traditional New Deal/Great Society politics. But that doesn't mean there is nothing to be done, or that the best that we can hope for is triage in the rollback of social democracy's achievements. While organized social movements with progressive goals are few and far between these days, that doesn't mean there's not a mass public for a new progressive politics. Indeed, there's probably a bigger public for such a politics now than at any time since the 1930s.

After all, a generation of economic decline and failed government response has not only made American politics ugly, it's also generated a huge potential base for the signature issues of progressives—greater social control of the economy and a democracy strong enough to enforce it. There is vast implicit demand for imposing some standards on corporate behavior, for making values matter in how we run our economy and distribute opportunity and reward. And there is vast demand for a more responsive and effective “government”—competent public and social authorities accountable to popular aims. Satisfying these demands could be the basis for a new mass democratic politics—a politics that would get progressives out of their marginal ghetto and into the business of running the country. It's not the case—it never has been—that we need to agree on everything before doing some good on some things.

Of course, a new progressive politics would need to take into account how the world has changed. We should recognize that the nation state can no longer be the only instrument of politics—the self-governing capacity of society itself would need to be increased. While the achievements of the welfare state were considerable, we need to be far less defensive about its defects. And while the politics of expression and charity are all well and good, we have to say something about how to “improve people's daily lives” and offer some “common sense” solutions to real and urgent problems.

But that still leaves plenty to be said, and we need not be timid. *In These Times* asked me and 10 other progressives to write sections in their area of expertise for an alternative Democratic platform. That platform, laid out below, could plausibly find majority support in the general population. It's not something likely to be offered anytime soon by either of the major parties, but something we might do well to refine, improve, and publicize together.

—Joel Rogers

# \$\$\$\$\$

## ECONOMICS

By Doug Henwood

**I**t's quite an accomplishment trying to turn a party of the bond market and free trade into the protector of “America's values,” as the Democratic platform does, unless of course you consider the accumulation of money to be the most American value of all.

For some time, the Clinton administration has been listing NAFTA and deficit reduction as its proudest economic achievements, while playing down the low unemployment rate and the fact that wage increases are slightly ahead of inflation. No doubt this reticence comes from a desire not to spook the bond market, which views these trends as the raw material of inflation.

Now, of course, it's campaign season, so you'd expect the administration to shed some of this reticence. It's surprising how little it has. The platform does mention the creation of more than ten million new jobs since Clinton took office, but that's about it. Unemployment is mentioned only in the context of an expanded version of the classic misery index: “The combined rate of inflation, unemployment, and mortgage interest rates is the lowest in three decades.” Far more ink is devoted to deficit reduction, free trade and R&D tax breaks. As in 1992, the words “labor union” appear nowhere in the platform.

What might a better platform look like? (I won't say a better Democratic platform, since the party is hopeless.) I start from the assumption that the goal of economic life should be raising the living standards of working people and the poor, and not “growing the GDP” or surpassing Japan in auto production, as if either goal makes people happier or the earth a nicer place to live. If this marks me as a dinosaur, so be it.

At a minimum, a civilized economic platform would assert that no one should be involuntarily poor. Transforming that promise into policy would require a basic minimum income. That doesn't mean rewarding people for idleness. In the classic days of the Swedish welfare state, the government practiced what is called an active labor market policy, meaning that a great deal of money and effort went into finding jobs for people who couldn't find them on their own. If jobs couldn't be found, they were created. The policy is expensive, yes, but less expensive than the Pentagon.

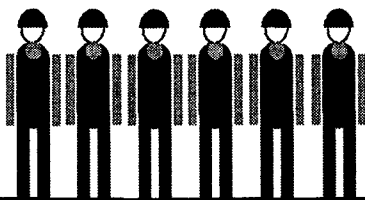
It should also be a matter of policy to reduce markedly what economists blandly call income dispersion. A full-employment policy would be a good start at raising incomes on the bottom, but it would also require a steepening of taxes on the richest 5% of the population. It's obscene that Bill Gates is building himself a subterranean palace while hordes wander the sidewalks homeless. Besides taxing the incomes of the overclass, taxing their wealth would be love-

ly as well. This fresh revenue should be put to use rebuilding collapsing schools and subways, and financing a single-payer health care system, universal free education from K through post-doc, and publicly funded child care.

But economic policy shouldn't be confined only to state action. In many areas, giant corporations are far more powerful than governments. Our wretched system of corporate governance, which focuses on stock price maximization to the exclusion of all else, needs badly to be junked. Portfolio managers and their representatives on corporate boards should be replaced with workers, customers and members of the public. Any attempts to privatize Social Security—a virtually certain project regardless of who is inaugurated in January 1997—and replace it with a system of universal IRAs should be fought to the death.

Exercises like this one are usually done in a tone of sweet reasonableness, as if the position taken were so self-evidently right that opposition will spontaneously dissolve. It won't. This is a fairly radical agenda, and would be treated as such by Wall Street, the Fortune 500 and their hired pens. But I think the broad public is more ready to hear a message like this than at any time in the last 20 years. Though don't count on the Democratic Party being the bearer of that message. ◀

Doug Henwood is the editor of the *Left Business Observer*.



## LABOR

By David Moberg

**T**he Democratic Party's most important task is making itself the champion of working people, from the poor to the middle class. Though it never wholly deserved it, the party once had an image as the defender of average Americans. Today, that image has crumbled. The platform says "We honor work in America," but it puts forward precious few policies that reflect that assertion. If the Democratic Party is to rebuild its foundation, it needs to put labor policy at the heart of its agenda.

As more decisions are left to the private marketplace, workers must have their own sources of power in that market. America has long taken pride in its variety of associations organized around religious, civic, political or almost any whimsical interest. We must defend the one form of association that has received relatively little protection: unions. We need to strengthen the right of all workers to choose whether they want to belong to a union or other

association of workers. The Democratic Party, as well as the president, should make it clear that they believe that workers should form unions and participate in them.

A number specific policies would put that principle into practice. If, for example, employers campaign against unionization, union advocates should have equal access to workers to rally support. If a union gets a majority of workers to sign cards as members, the union should be granted legal recognition without the further delay of an election process that employers can exploit. If employers fire union supporters, they should be subject to heavy penalties or even criminal prosecution. If employers do not negotiate an initial contract within a reasonable period, workers should have easy recourse to arbitration to impose a contract.

We should also support other ways of giving more power to workers on the job. Health and safety committees with strong enforcement authority should be mandated in all but the smallest workplaces. Workers should have the right to strike without being permanently replaced. They should also have the right to a safe workplace and protection against firing without just cause. For the sake of workers in the United States as well as in other countries, we need to make the protection of labor rights central to all trade agreements and a key element in foreign policy.

Yet it's not enough to organize a larger part of the workforce and enforce individual workers' rights. We must construct a system to "provide for the common welfare" around the idea that everyone should be guaranteed a job with a living wage and access throughout their lives to education and health care. The welfare "reform" bill that Clinton has signed will prove disastrous not just for the poor and jobless, but for working people. A new and better social-welfare system can be built. That system would offer universal health care, credits for children and child care and a simpler, more inclusive program of education and income support for workers who lose their jobs. The Earned Income Tax Credit (which Clinton did improve) should be further expanded, becoming a form of guaranteed minimum income (or negative income tax). The minimum wage should be indexed so that it is always half the median wage.

Ultimately, workers' power and income depend on broad macroeconomic policies. The Federal Reserve Board and the federal government need to make full employment as great a priority as price stability. The federal budget, excluding legitimate borrowing for public investment, should be balanced when there is full employment, not at any expense. The tax system should become more progressive, not flatter. It can be simplified and made more fair, mainly by eliminating the massive tax breaks available to corporations and the rich. In addition, the Democrats should use their political bully pulpit to demand that corporations do their part to provide decent jobs.

If the Democratic Party is to remake itself as the defender of working people, it needs to recognize the seamless link between strengthening the rights of workers and recreating a progressive government with widespread popular appeal. ◀





## FOREIGN POLICY

By Robert L. Borosage

**B**ob Dole says he hasn't read the Republican platform and won't be bound by it. The Democratic Party platform merits similar disregard. In the foreign policy section, the party looks upon all that its president has made and finds it good. All opportunities are "seized," all steps "bold," all efforts "aggressive."

The celebratory tone is echoed in a notably paltry agenda for the future. The party oddly praises the president for adding \$50 billion to his \$1.2 trillion defense plan, and pledges to spend even more on weapons in the future. It commits to spending "\$3 billion a year on six different missile defense systems," while opposing the wasteful Republican one. The major new challenge is said to be the threat of "terrorism, drug trafficking and international crime," and the Party is "determined to keep the war" on these "at the center of our security agenda."

Progressives might suggest a different course. It would emphasize two growing challenges: environmental destruction that is no longer a nuisance but a threat; and a global economy that is widening the gap between the few and the many at home and abroad.

At home, we should support sensible reductions in military budgets still at Cold War levels, freeing up funds to invest in cities and schools, to build fast trains and rebuild old sewers, and to begin the transition to a sustainable economy. As we unpack the Cold War political economy, progressives should demand a true GI Bill for workers, providing training and income support for the displaced. We must end the truly inane "payoffs for layoffs," the billions given to merging defense contractors, who then pay off executives and lay off workers.

Abroad, we need to argue that rhetorical support for democracy and human rights is mocked by debt and destitution. The abandonment of millions of desperate people to the mercy of the global market undermines human rights at home and abroad. Purling adherence to "free trade" in a market dominated by a few hundred multinationals makes no sense. Progressives should advocate a trade policy that works for working people, combined with a new engagement abroad to preserve the global commons and encourage development from the bottom up. As a first step, labor rights and environmental protections must be built into all international trade agreements. In the end, a new trade policy requires new global rules and institutions. We need to create a new Bretton Woods to replace the failed IMF and

World Bank. We need to develop laws to regulate global markets that would hold multinationals accountable. And we need to provide new resources to lift the burden of debt and austerity that shackles growth throughout the world, and to invest in people—literacy, health, hope.

We currently spend more money on the forces responsible for defending South Korea from its bankrupt brethren to the north than we do in policing our own streets. A rational review of Cold War commitments would ask our allies to bear more of the lesser burdens of their own defense and end our shameful 36-year-old vendetta against Cuba. It would take a hard look at our commitment of lives and resources to the defense of feudal regimes literally built on sand in the Persian Gulf. It would provide the Russians and the other nations of the former Soviet bloc with the time and resources for internal reconstruction similar to that allotted our European allies after World War II.

With a reduction in U.S. military spending, the United States could lead, rather than impede, efforts to curtail the global trade in arms, and stop sending guns to dictators. We must take the initiative to rid the world of indiscriminate weapons, from nukes to mines. Instead of defaulting on international obligations, slashing aid, and starving diplomacy, we should invest a small percentage of the funds now wasted in the Pentagon to help build truly international peacekeeping capacities, to seed new institutions for democratic development and to assume a fair share of the burden of moving to a green global economy.

Inevitably, the platform of an incumbent president reflects the mood of the administration. This administration, intent on defending the status quo against the depredations of the right, seeks no mandate for change—a perfect exhibit of why second-term presidencies so often fail. ◀

Robert L. Borosage is co-president for Campaign for America's Future.



## ENVIRONMENT

By David Helvarg

**D**espite overwhelming public support for strengthening environmental protections, the Democratic Party platform is vague rather than visionary. It looks to tinker with regulation rather than recognize the truth of what Al Gore once wrote, that the environment will be the defining issue of the 21st Century. A serious commitment to the future would have to include:

- *Agriculture:* Building on the growing market

demand for more organic foodstuffs, we must shift from commodity-based subsidies to incentives to encourage conservation, rehabilitate chemically dependent soils, protect ground water, and support family-based farming. This could be achieved through establishing land trusts for property that farmers might otherwise sell to developers, and tax incentives and other mechanisms that limit urban sprawl and environmentally destructive industrial farming.

- **Parks and Ecosystems:** Along with establishing new National Parks (as 70% of the public believes we should), we have to stop financially starving the park system we have. Along with a shift in federal funding, the public should be willing to pay the cost of a movie (\$7.50 a person or \$20 per carload) to enjoy these "crown jewels" of wilderness. At the same time, larger protected ecosystems and wildlife corridors have to be established to prevent the parks from becoming non-viable biological islands. We should stop using our tax dollars to subsidize extractive industries on public land and instead focus on protecting biodiversity for all Americans.

- **Oceans:** Either the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration should be expanded or a new cabinet-level Department of Oceans (as first proposed by Lyndon Johnson) should be established to protect the ocean's living resources. Since President Reagan declared a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone in the waters surrounding the country (a territory larger in size than the continental United States), America's commercial fisheries have collapsed and productive coastal waters have deteriorated. Using our National Marine Sanctuaries as a model, this new agency (working in partnership with coastal communities) could help establish democratic governance over our blue frontier.

- **Toxic pollution:** Community Right to Know efforts need to be strengthened. This would be an important first step in redefining the meaning of cost-benefit analysis when it comes to synthetic chemicals. Of some 70,000 chemicals synthesized since World War II, only about 2 percent have been fully tested for human and biological health effects. Given the disturbing environmental impacts from chemicals such as DDT, PCBs and CFCs, manufacturers should have to prove a new chemical (or certain existing families of chemicals such as organochlorines) is biologically benign, alone or in combination with others, before it can be marketed. Moreover, U.S.-based manufacturers should not be allowed to sell or use domestically banned chemicals overseas either.

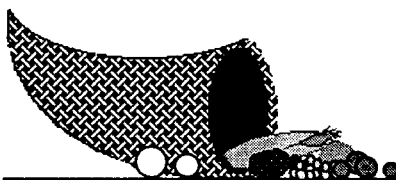
- **Climate Change:** The world's scientists now agree that human-caused climate change is real and already underway. Given that consensus, the United States' commitment this summer in Geneva to reduce global carbon dioxide production is an important first step. Fulfilling that commitment will require, at the very least, an immediate energy and gas tax (similar to the one the Clinton administration first proposed and then backed away from

in 1993), and a shift of federal tax-breaks and R & D funding from petroleum (deep ocean drilling) to renewable energy sources. Also needed are a crash program to convert from petroleum to natural gas as a transitional fuel over the next decade and concessionary technology transfers from the United States to less-developed countries to help them along a soft energy path.

- **Population:** Human population, which grew incrementally over the 40,000 years up to 1956, has doubled in the last 40, and is expected to nearly double again in the next 50. All studies indicate that increases in female education and political enfranchisement, along with improvements in rural living conditions, would result in slower population growth in both developed and developing countries. We need a population policy based on support for democracy, land reform and women's rights.

- **Sustainable Development:** The world could not sustain itself for long at the levels of consumption practiced in our country, nor can we expect to maintain our quality of life based on a theoretical system of unlimited market expansion. We've all seen a gradual loss of unique natural places and rural and urban cultures to the "malling of America." To be more than an oxymoron, sustainable development must be based on a new "resource economics" that, unlike traditional economics, recognizes the value to the earth's societies of trees left standing, rivers undammed and life in all its diversity. ◀

David Helvarg is a television producer and author of *The War Against Greens* (Sierra Club Books).



## SOCIAL WELFARE

By Joel Rogers

The liberal social welfare state is being chipped away piece by piece by the Republican Congress and a president eager to garner the support of the elusive "center" of the electorate. Instead of repairing a broken system, perhaps it's time to come up with an entirely new model of social welfare.

- **Starting gate equality:** The welfare system now in existence is fundamentally flawed. We know that late-in-life interventions usually make little difference in the earnings capacity of workers, and that people hate having their money taken away from them after they've "earned" it. In the United States in particular, belated attempts to address racial injustice through preferential hiring programs are deeply unpopular social policy, violating as they do widespread perceptions of the requirements of fairness. More-



over, a welfare state that provides its most concrete rewards to the unproductive elderly risks perverse effects on the savings behavior and work effort of the young and middle-aged.

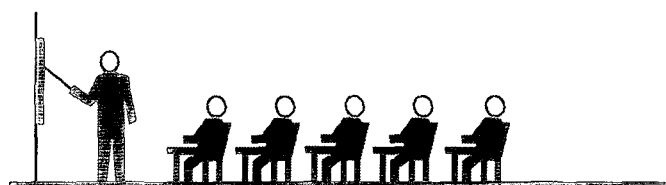
It would be altogether better if people entered the labor market with more equal endowments, thus leading “naturally” to a more equal distribution of market wages. It would be better if the prospects of all job seekers were determined by “the content of their character,” which would require more open hiring practices, and firmer penalties for race, sex and other invidious discrimination. It would also be better if the burden of protecting the frail elderly was not borne by children and young adults.

Imagine, then, a welfare state in which social expenditures were shifted forward in the life cycle, wedding popular support for “equal opportunity” to the resources needed to make it real. As a natural corollary of this move, imagine shifting policy analysis toward a lifecycle framework for measuring equality—looking at earnings and income over the course of a life—rather than a cross-sectional one. In such a frame, it should not bother us (especially in the context of a higher social wage) that young workers make considerably less than older ones, or older workers less than younger ones, so long as we have confidence that over their lifecycles everyone would get more or less the same. More generally, within such a frame, we might ask when people need money most and least during their life-cycle, and direct labor market and income policies accordingly.

• *Social wages and tax universalism:* Starting-gate equality would improve the distribution of income in this country. But for all sorts of reasons, we’re still going to want some substantial increase in the “social wage”—that basket of benefits that members of the society can get independent of their employment status. The need for national health insurance is the most obvious example of such an increase; massive support for child care and other family assistance is probably next most important. The problem is that, while providing social benefits to everyone is politically popular, it is incredibly costly. And providing only to the poor all but guarantees such benefits will be stingy and inadequate.

This circle can be squared, however, through “tax universalism,” or the taxation of social benefits as well as private income. Imagine a scheme in which social benefits were universal, but taxed on a steeply progressive basis relative to private income. Under plausible (at least arithmetically plausible) assumptions, we could pay for vast increases in the social wage *and* reduce the tax burden on the middle class. For the poor, things would get a whole lot better. For the middle class, the combination of tax cuts on private income and receipt of at least some portion of the increased social wage would also improve their after-tax position. Shared benefit from the new regime would help unite the middle class and poor around it. Welfare state fiscal stability would be restored. And poverty traps would be eliminated, as work would “pay” for people at all income levels. ◀

Joel Rogers teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and is national chair of the New Party.



## EDUCATION

By Deborah Meier

<sup>66</sup>Today’s Democratic Party knows that education is the key to opportunity,” says the Democratic platform. And so it is, but opportunity to what? To “prosper” in “the new global economy,” says the platform. “Cutting education as we move into the 21st century would be like cutting defense spending at the height of the cold war.” Given this statement of the problem, the wan, half-baked solutions—more vocational programs with names like “School-to-Work”; getting “every classroom wired to the Information Super-highway”—aren’t surprising. A real progressive program, which saw our children not as little MX missiles and Polaris subs aimed at Germany and Japan but as future citizens, would look quite different.

The platform should spell out more clearly what is at stake. The purpose of education should be building democracy and strengthening the nation as a whole, not just individual economic advancement. We need to remember Thomas Jefferson’s words: “I know no safety depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves: And if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to educate their discretion.” It’s a tall order for a complex modern society, but it’s within our powers. To shrink from that responsibility is to risk undermining our democracy.

If we want all citizens to be capable of exercising high levels of judgment—as voters, jurors, community activists, neighbors and productive members of the workforce—then we need a public education system that addresses the circumstances and needs of today’s children. The system we designed a century or more ago for a small, largely male and white elite won’t do any longer. In so far as it ever served us well, it presupposed that most citizens would be educated largely outside of formal schooling—in small town meetings, union halls, political clubs, churches, neighborhood organizations and formal as well as informal apprenticeships. That’s where most people learned the arts and crafts of civics and character education, picked up the know-how as well as knowledge to participate in public life, and learned the skills needed to be productive workers. But in the last century, the American student body has increased a hundredfold, while the American education system has crowded out all alternative forms of education and training. And we’re surprised that kids are in trouble?

We’ve placed on the agenda expectations for our children and schools without providing either the moral or

financial resources to carry them out. We want schools to pass on “cultural literacy,” but we allow our culture to be demeaned everywhere in the media. Instead of designing education so that everyone, including families and neighbors, are part of the process, we’ve largely abandoned our children—rich and poor—to the care of overburdened school teachers. We kick kids out of our school buildings at 3 o’clock, but today’s economy requires their families work longer hours and thus leave them with no safe place to go.

As a result, our schools are growing meaner—especially at the bottom end, but we’ll all feel it soon enough. We need a 21st-century redesign of schooling, one that encourages young people, their families and their schools to develop relationships of respect and trust. We need incentives for schools to be custom-designed, not mass produced. They need to be:

- small enough for everyone to know each other well and take responsibility for the work they do together;
- sufficiently self-governing so that important decisions are made close to where the action takes place;
- places of choice for families;
- accountable in ways that don’t stifle ingenuity and community, but expose people to external standards and external public review.

Smallness doesn’t require abandoning existing school buildings—just using them differently. Nor does self-governance require a single standard model for site-based decision-making. Public school choice can create greater equity, greater diversity and greater unity—if we use it for that end. And if accountability is to be fair and rigorous, we need to provide all our children with relatively equal resources. Money won’t change a thing, but change requires money.

We can redesign public schools so that the capacity of all our children to engage in thoughtful and demanding intellectual tasks is not bypassed. Exercising power responsibly, being respectful of one’s neighbor’s ideas, and competent to hear and make sense of complex matters are learnable skills. ◀

**Deborah Meier** is the author of *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem* (Beacon Press, 1996).



## HEALTH CARE

By John Canham-Clyne

**A**lthough both major parties keep promising to highlight their “differences” during the campaign, you would be hard-pressed to find any variation in the health-care planks of their platforms. The Republican platform states: “The

goal of the Republican Party is to maintain the quality of America’s health care while making health care and health insurance more accessible and more affordable.” The Democrats slug back with “The Democratic Party is committed to ensuring that Americans have access to affordable, high-quality health care.”

Note the missing “all” before “Americans,” a retreat from the 1992 Democratic platform’s commitment to universal coverage. The 1996 platform papers over many things. It makes no mention of the more than 40 million Americans who have no insurance, nor the tens of millions more whose health care coverage is badly eroding. It fails to note the astonishingly rapid consolidation of the health care market into an oligopoly, nor the billions of dollars wasted by private insurance companies on administration and profit. Nor does the platform weigh in on the phenomenon infuriating millions of consumers across the nation who supposedly have good coverage: the denial of medical care and other abuses by huge for-profit managed-care corporations seeking to fatten their bottom lines.

A party committed to human decency, fiscal restraint and the promotion of the general welfare needs to acknowledge that every person has the right to the best health care that society can afford. That can best be achieved through a single-payer health care system. Our experiment with for-profit medicine generally, and for-profit health insurance in particular, has been a social and economic disaster. We spend more money on health care than any other industrialized nation, yet receive fewer services for it. Millions of Americans suffer terribly and die prematurely because they can’t afford routine medical care that can and should be available to everyone.

The single payer system could be built on the successful foundation of Medicare. Legislation should be passed that would fully fund Medicare, expand its benefits to close gaps in coverage—especially for prescription drugs and long-term care—and extend the program to all Americans. In that way, everyone would be guaranteed comprehensive preventive, primary, emergency and long-term health care from the doctor, nurse, midwife, therapist, hospital, clinic, nursing home or other health care provider of their choice. Those who prefer to receive care in managed-care networks could do so; such networks, however, would be organized on a not-for-profit basis and would not be allowed to impose financial penalties on members who sought care outside the network. Similarly, private hospitals should not be organized on a for-profit basis.

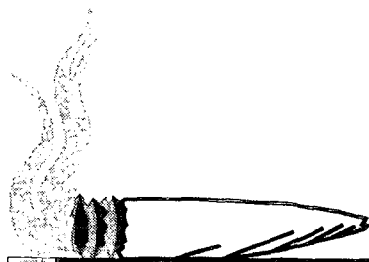
Of course, good health requires more than financing access to care. Providers and consumers of health care need information to make appropriate choices. So a party seeking improvement in the national health should be committed to significantly increasing funding for the Agency for Health Care Policy Research, which sets practice guidelines based on research that analyzes how well different treatments actually work. It should also try to improve the quality of reporting to the National Practitioner Databank—which



currently collects information on doctors, but only gives it to hospitals and insurance companies—and make that information available to the public so consumers can better judge the quality of health care providers.

Tobacco-related disease kills more than 400,000 Americans each year, constituting the single largest threat to public health. Thus we should affirm the Food and Drug Administration's authority to regulate nicotine in cigarettes as a drug, and support the agency's proposed efforts to curb the marketing of tobacco products to children. The federal government should also take aggressive action to reduce the large numbers of preventable job-related deaths and serious illnesses that occur each year—an issue completely ignored by the two major parties. ◀

**John Canham-Clyne** is research director of Congress Watch, the legislative arm of Public Citizen, a national public-interest organization founded by Ralph Nader in 1971. He is co-author of *The Rational Option for a National Health Program* (Pamphleteers Press, 1995).



## DRUG POLICY

By Eva Bertram and Kenneth Sharpe

**D**espite the billions of dollars invested in tough law enforcement campaigns, U.S. drug policy has failed not only to reduce the drug supply but to stem drug abuse, addiction and related social problems. The Clinton administration's early and modest efforts to shift some resources from the war on the drug supply to drug treatment and prevention have fallen short, and the 1996 Democratic Party platform reflects the same failed strategy pursued by both parties for decades. It is time to re-evaluate our drug policy and change direction.

The fundamental principles that should guide drug control are clear:

- *Stop funding flawed policies.* The more than \$80 billion spent fighting the drug supply since 1980 has failed in its central aim: to raise the price of dangerous drugs high enough to discourage use and abuse. Prices for a pure gram of both heroin and cocaine (measured in 1994 dollars) have in fact declined, not risen, over the past 15 years. Levels of cocaine and heroin abuse are as high as ever.

The problem is not the lack of resources, but a misconceived strategy. The effort to suppress the market in drugs through a strategy centered on law enforcement is doomed to fail. Government prohibition makes drug profits so high that producers, traffickers and dealers anxious to take

advantage of the high demand in the United States will always be plentiful, regardless of how many we arrest. The competition among often violent criminals for a share of these profits keeps the crime rate up and the price down, and assures that the war on supply will fail to ease abuse and addiction.

- *Regulate supply.* Pouring more money into this kind of war may look tough, but it hasn't been very effective. Drug law enforcement must be redirected from futile campaigns—such as costly border interdiction and source-country drug wars—into law enforcement programs that strengthen the ability of local communities to prevent and reduce their drug problems. Integrating prevention, treatment and crime-fighting through community policing programs is a good beginning.

- *Make prevention work.* Prevention and treatment must be the primary instrument of drug control and should address the varying harms caused by different psychoactive drugs—marijuana, heroin, cocaine, as well as tobacco and alcohol. As a first step, existing budget allocations—70 percent to law enforcement and 30 percent to treatment and prevention—must be reversed. Equally important, the way we approach treatment and prevention should be reformed.

Drug prevention programs must be based not on scare tactics, but on factual information and honest judgments about the dangers of drug use. Despite our best efforts, young people in particular will experiment with drugs, and some will become heavy users. Drug prevention programs must seek ways to prevent casual use from becoming heavy use or addiction, and to prevent users from engaging in dangerous behaviors while under the influence (such as driving or sharing contaminated heroin needles).

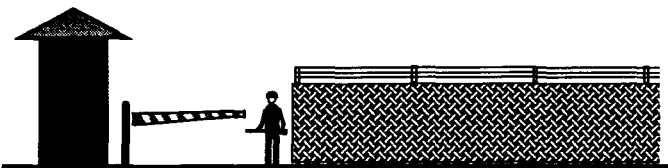
Effective prevention demands more than classroom lectures. It requires addressing the environments that encourage drug taking—dealing with peer pressure, with the effects of abusive or substance-abusing parents on children, and with the ways in which mental illness, homelessness and joblessness can increase the risk of drug taking.

- *Make treatment work.* For those suffering from abuse and addiction, our primary aim must be to heal rather than to punish. Drug abuse, like heavy drinking, is a health problem. Those who injure others or commit crimes under the influence should be punished, but putting people in jail because they use or abuse drugs—as today's harsh laws against drug possession often do—turns people with health problems into criminals. Threatening pregnant women who use drugs with jail or loss of custody will discourage them from getting the treatment they and their unborn children need. Taking health and welfare benefits away from people because they have had drug problems—as recent welfare reform proposals suggest—will exacerbate addiction. Our challenge is to provide accessible, affordable treatment on demand.

Like prevention, drug treatment must be reconsidered. Total and permanent abstinence is one goal, but it cannot be the only standard for successful treatment. Steady

progress toward minimizing abuse, moderating use, reducing harm to others, and securing and holding a job are also important gains for drug-dependent individuals. Finally, treatment programs must be coupled with follow-up care and rehabilitation. If people in treatment are going to say no to drugs when they leave the program, they need help in creating something to say yes to, such as a decent place to live and steady and meaningful work. ◀

**Eva Bertram and Kenneth Sharpe** are co-authors (with Morris Blachman and Peter Andreas) of *Drug War Politics: The Price of Denial* (University of California Press, 1996).



## IMMIGRATION

By Raúl Hinojosa Ojeda and Antonio Gonzalez

**T**he Democratic Party platform, while drawing the line at barring the children of undocumented immigrants from school, does not diverge greatly from the Republican position on immigration. The party says it firmly opposes welfare benefits for illegal immigrants, and that the sponsor of legal immigrants should be held "legally responsible for supporting them." Saying that "we cannot tolerate illegal immigration," the Democrats call for dramatically increased border enforcement. They appear to be competing with the Republicans over who can throw the most money, personnel and equipment at the INS. The party brags that Clinton has increased the border patrol by 40 percent so that "agents are so close they can see each other."

The reason the two parties sound so much alike is that they both share the same set of erroneous assumptions about undocumented immigration. The reality is that undocumented immigration is primarily the result of the United States' historical dependence on Mexican labor, which subsidizes and provides net economic benefits to U.S. residents. Indeed, the United States has the largest de facto "guest worker" program in modern history, in which workers toil under sub-legal and substandard conditions.

Immigrants are net fiscal and economic contributors, a fact that even California Gov. Pete Wilson acknowledges when he correctly states that the undocumented pay more in overall federal and state taxes than they receive in local services. As countless studies have shown, undocumented immigrants come to the United States to work in low-wage jobs, not to live off of social services. The denial of access to social services will not result in less migration, but merely push this essential labor force further underground.

Seeing Mexican immigration in this binational context

is the first step to creating an alternative vision of how immigration can be managed so that wages, working conditions, human rights and economic growth improve on both sides of the border. We must attack the poverty and lack of basic rights of this binational labor force in a way that provides economic benefits for both countries. Only in that way will the effort be politically viable. A three-pronged approach is required:

- *Increase U.S.-Mexico economic and social negotiations.* We need to go beyond NAFTA and craft long-term agreements between Mexico and the United States on trade, capital and labor migration relations. We also need a North American agreement on labor and human rights with real teeth.

The U.S.-Mexico border region should be recognized as an area of binational interdependence. Border residents should be allowed to travel, work, shop and participate in recreational activities on either side of the border.

- *Establish long-term development financing for Mexico.* The United States should help promote moderately high growth and sustainable development in Mexico. To accomplish this, we need to create new institutional mechanisms—or expand new institutions like the North American Development Bank. Investment, especially in health and education, should be directed in particular to the poorer regions of the country from which the majority of migrants come. If wages were to rise in Mexico, many potential migrants would choose to stay in Mexico. Sustained economic growth in Mexico would have the added benefit of generating a large increase in high-wage jobs in U.S. export industries.

We should use European integration as our model. Free trade by itself will never promote the kind of development that will close the income gap between Mexico and the United States. It is important to remember that 35 years ago, the wage gap between the United States and Mexico was similar to that between Northern and Southern Europe. Whereas the gap in North America is virtually the same today, European integration—which involved direct aid and subsidies to the poorer nations—prompted high growth, wage convergence and a precipitous decline of south-north migration.

- *Enhance immigrants' social and political rights.* As the income gap closes, we could begin moving to a new North American immigration visa system. Visa holders would be guaranteed basic human and labor rights regardless of their immigration status. This would eliminate the 10 to 15 percent "exploitation wage gap" we currently charge undocumented immigrants in the United States. In this way, the United States and Mexico could finally be weaned away from their dependence on an exploitative system that denies basic rights to its migrant labor force. ◀

**Raúl Hinojosa Ojeda** is research director of the UCLA North American Integration and Development Center. **Antonio Gonzalez** is president of the Southwest Voter Research Institute.



# **B L A C K A M E R I C A**

## Choosing between evils

“I

t's obvious today that America has defaulted on its promissory note so far as her citizens of color are concerned,” Dr. Martin Luther King told the crowd during the historic 1963 March on Washington. “Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked insufficient funds.”

In this speech, which has become famous for its “I Have A Dream” refrain, King added, “and so we’ve come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.” King’s marchers left Washington in 1963 without cashing that check.

In 1996, the Rev. Al Sharpton and his New York-based National Action Network have taken up King’s cause. Sharpton is organizing demonstrations at the major conventions

under the banner “The Campaign To Cash The Check.” Kicking off the campaign at the New Hope Community Baptist Church in Chicago in early July, Sharpton explained his reason for the effort. “The Republicans and Democrats will hold a coronation this summer, and so will Ross Perot’s Reform Party,” he said. “And they will be setting the political course for the new millennium. But you and I are not on the agenda. We’re being ignored, and nobody can win when they’re ignored. If we don’t mobilize now, I don’t know what it will take to mobilize us.”

The flamboyant minister and former U.S. Senate candidate has taken his show on the road, hitting black communities across the country with the same message. Sharpton is a minister groomed in the civil rights (or integrationist) tradition of King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference, but in this effort he is working with several black nationalists, who hail from a different strain of the black movement. Sharpton shared the podium in Chicago with Conrad Worrill,

chairman of the National Black United Front, the largest secular black nationalist organization in the country. Worrill told the crowd he had never before worked with Sharpton, “but the urgency of our situation demands that we pull all of our forces together for the fight.” The alliance exemplifies the principle of “operational unity,” which is becoming more prevalent among black leaders and underwrote last October’s Million Man March.

“Urgency,” a word that black nationalists have never been hesitant to use, is being invoked more and more often these days by mainstream black analysts with no radical axe to grind. The mood has impelled African-Americans from across the political spectrum to search for operational unity, and accounts for much of the success of last year’s march. While political candidates debate the benefits of middle-class tax cuts and other ways to shrink the federal government, the black community senses that it is sinking into a quicksand of negative statistics. As William Julius Wilson’s new book, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, makes clear, the underground economy is often the only source of income in America’s increasingly jobless inner-city neighborhoods. As a result, nearly one-third of all black men in their 20s are ensnared in the burgeoning prison-industrial complex, and, according to the Sentencing Project, black women comprise the fastest-growing category of inmate.

In addition to a panoply of economic dislocations, African-American communities are facing significant political setbacks. In an eerie replay of the post-Reconstruction period (between 1869 and 1901, 22 blacks served in Congress; they had all vanished from office by 1902), African-Americans again are being stripped of their political

*As African-Americans sense the deepening urgency of their political marginalization, their leaders look for a party they can support.*

By Salim Muwakkil

resources. The Republican Party's electoral triumphs of 1994 instantly erased the power members of Congress had taken years to gain. But the greater threat to political representation is in the judicial arena. After the Supreme Court's 1992 *Shaw v. Reno* ruling found race-specific districting unconstitutional, many black-majority districts crafted to comply with the Voting Rights Act have been successfully challenged. Analysts at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies project that the Congressional Black Caucus could lose 25 percent of its record 41 members by the time this judicial assault is over.

For many blacks, these are clear symptoms of crisis. But most Americans seem convinced that compensatory programs designed for those handicapped by U.S. racism are now unnecessary; big government is a greater enemy than social injustice in today's America. Accordingly, the GOP-led Congress has slashed job skills training and education programs, passed a Draconian "welfare reform" bill (signed by a Democratic president), dumped prison rehabilitation programs, and taken other actions to shred the social safety net. With New Democrat candidate Bill Clinton sprinting to the right to recapture disenchanted white voters, neither of the major parties is paying attention to what many in the black community consider a state of emergency.

So desperate has the situation become, and so gridlocked has been the reaction from the two major parties, that even an old-fashioned liberal like former *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker is urging blacks to desert the Democratic Party and form a party of their own. His new book, *Tragic Failure: Racial Integration in America*, is an anguished examination of our racial impasse. The racial wounds in our national heart will eventually destroy us if they are not healed, he predicts, and they can only be healed if blacks advance economically and engage in effective political action of their own, rather than melding into the white mainstream. "In their own interest, therefore, but also in that of a racially torn nation," Wicker writes, "blacks should turn away from the Democrats to form a new party dedicated to economic equality through economic growth for whites and blacks alike."

Wicker, who is white, understands the frustrations driving black organizers toward independent solutions. Sharpton's campaign is one of many attempting to marshal opposition to black America's new marginalization. His is an outside strategy of protest. Two weeks after Sharpton's opening salvo at the New Hope Community Baptist

Church, two major conferences convened in Chicago to offer an inside strategy.

One conference, tagged the "National Hearing on Issues and Public Policy," was sponsored by the National African American Leadership Summit (NAALS), headed by the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis. The other, which took place about 10 miles to the north, was convened by the Rev. Jesse Jackson's National Rainbow Coalition/Operation PUSH. Both gatherings, on July's last weekend, were designed to fashion a "black agenda" that would allow for more focused political action.

The Rainbow Coalition conference attracted the bigger political names, including several black elected officials (Reps. Charles Rangel of New York and Maxine Waters of California), and Jackson made it clear that President Clinton was the best choice of a sorry lot. Choosing the Democrats is "a political choice, not a moral choice," Jackson said. "And the prize is much more than a Democratic president." If Democrats were to retake control of Congress, he noted, members of the Congressional Black Caucus would regain the committee chairmanships and other positions of power they lost in the wake of the 1994 Republic sweep. "In my opinion, the stakes are much too high for us to engage in some experimental strategy that may take our eyes off the prize," Jackson said in a later interview.

But for Chavis' group, the prize is more than a rejuvenated Black Caucus. During the NAALS conference, which attracted the larger crowds, Chavis urged the attendees to be more discriminating in their political support. "We no longer intend to give our vote away," he said. "No more back door deals, hidden agendas, backpedaling or reacting

## Farrakhan, the power broker

**T**he competing conferences in Chicago revealed growing discomfort with Louis Farrakhan's enhanced role in black leadership. Though nominally headed by Chavis, the NAALS is increasingly dominated by the Nation of Islam (NOI). That's understandable, since the NOI has furnished much of the NAALS's financial and organizational wherewithal. As Chavis himself once said in another context, "he who pays the piper calls the tune." But it's unfair to blame mercenary motives exclusively for Chavis's bend toward Farrakhan; as the success of the Million Man March made clear, the NOI's black nationalist ideology is the flavor of the times among African-Americans.

The idea for the NAALS meeting had been first suggested by Ronald Walters, a political science professor at Howard University, during a gathering last November. Walters wanted to assemble a wide range of participants—including elected officials and civil rights activists—and present a number of key agenda items to the Democratic Party platform committee. But during the planning stages, Walters soon realized that Farrakhan's forces were calling the shots (see "Breaking Convention," May 27). He pulled out of the NAALS effort and became the prime mover of the Rainbow Coalition conference.

Having underestimated the appeal of nationalism, and too late to jump on the Million Man March bandwagon, Jackson has been overshadowed by the populist and popular Farrakhan. By returning to his Chicago base, Jackson is also returning to the grassroots orientation of his Operation PUSH past. By organizing a political conference that attracted both independent theorists and nuts-and-bolts politicians, Jackson sought to contrast his gathering with the more marginal players assembled with NAALS on the South Side. —S.M.



to slick TV ads." President Clinton, he argued, has done little for African-Americans. "Why should we rush to support him or his party?"

The NAALS is seeking to become the "third political force" that Nation of Islam (NOI) leader Louis Farrakhan spoke about during last year's march. Conferees cobbled

troops to sit out the election.

The NOI's full entry into the arena of electoral politics is a move away from its insular tradition. Farrakhan's rhetorical style has of late been leavened with new sensitivities. In fact, some critics complain that Chavis has had too much of a moderating influence on the NOI leader.

"It's tragic that a Democratic loyalist like Ben Chavis has been able to trick Minister Farrakhan into supporting Bill Clinton," lamented Lenora Fulani of the controversial New Alliance Party. Fulani, who has twice run for president as a purported leftist, has become a passionate supporter of Ross Perot's Reform Party. She has chided both Jackson and Farrakhan for being dupes of the Democrats, and she is harshly critical of Chavis. The way she sees things, the Reform Party is where the real independent action is. "The independent white voter needs blacks in order to go somewhere," she said. "Blacks need the independent white voter in order to have somewhere to go." Fulani's romance with Perot's party is an odd alliance indeed, but it's just another symptom of the political volatility of these times.

Fulani's argument, however, cannot be dismissed out of hand. After all, there is some truth to her claim that "an independent party that

The Rev. Al Sharpton

brings whites and blacks together to lead a democratic restructuring could break the racial impasse." And if more African-Americans were to lean toward the Reform Party, both major parties would be obliged to lure them away. For example, would Clinton sign such a punitive, GOP-crafted "welfare reform" bill if he thought it might push more blacks toward Perot? Probably not. The Reform Party offers actual political leverage. But at what price? Fiscal conservatism is the animating principle of Perot's people and their distaste for the federal government differs little from the rabid right-wingers of the GOP. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the middle Americans who flock to Perot's quasi-Republican banner would be willing to consider the economic restructuring urged by Wicker.

Thus, the African-American electorate enters yet another election season with little more than a choice among evils. In 1996, the Democrats clearly are the lesser evil, but the differences are diminishing. Perhaps by the next political season, a viable third party will have emerged to champion the cause of economic equality and to compel the nation to address the festering racial wound in its heart and help cash King's check. But don't hold your breath. ◀



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together what they called a "national action agenda," to which the candidates of the three major parties were to be required to respond. The agenda calls for, among other things: a national moratorium on demolition of public housing; a more equitable public school system; community-based programs to fight crime, violence and drugs; and reform of the criminal justice system. Other parts of the agenda reflect the conservative nationalism of the NOI. The document calls on leaders to center the political system around God, to confront the institutionalization of the ideology of white supremacy throughout the world, and to establish independent political parties and institutions.

The NAALS has scheduled a "national convention of the poor and the oppressed" to be held in St. Louis, Mo. on September 20-22, during which it will inform supporters how the parties have responded to their demands. If none of the parties has reacted favorably to the agenda, the group says it will urge the black electorate to refrain from participating in the election.

Despite the rhetoric, however, the NAALS will probably be pushed toward the Democrats. After all, no party but the Democrats would look twice at the items on the group's action agenda. And since the NAALS and the NOI have embarked on an ambitious campaign to promote voter registration, it seems unlikely that they would counsel their

# C O N V E N T I O N

## Outside the big tent

***As the GOP promoted an image of party unity and inclusiveness for TV viewers, they were giving a cool reception to the party faithful of the Christian right.***

By Thomas Goetz  
SAN DIEGO

**T**he city of San Diego is a perfect metaphor for all things Republican. Home of the U.S. Navy's Pacific fleet, and Roger Hedgecock, the mayor turned rabid radio talk-show host, California's southernmost metropolis is thoroughly and enthusiastically conservative. From anti-immigration groups eager to wall off the nearby Mexican border to the "historic" gas-lamp district overrun by legions of yuppies, San Diego is perhaps the country's finest example of the GOP urban ideal in action: It's clean, proper and thoroughly fake.

All of which meant that San Diego was the perfect place to host the Republican National Convention. As 30,000 Republicans took it by storm this August, the city was one splendid mix of red, white and blue—entirely uniform in appearance, attitude and behavior.

At least, that's how it was supposed to look. With handpicked speakers and carefully orchestrated

events, the convention ideal was one of unity and inclusiveness tailored for the wider TV audience. On stage, emcee Christine Todd Whitman introduced all the women and politicians of color the party could muster, from Oklahoma Rep. J.C. Watts to Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. And if the "BIG TENT" stickers affixed to every delegate's blouse or lapel had left any doubts, they even brought in an American Indian in full headdress to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

But the festivities the GOP had programmed for the major networks had a dark side, a side unseen and little reported outside San Diego. While the party raged inside the convention center, delegates fumed outside, as the all-for-one mandate shut out the Christian right. This was no love-in; it was a lock-out.

The religious right thought San Diego would be the place where they would declare their triumph in the Republican Party. They

had commandeered the party platform, making it reflect their position on abortion and immigration, and now they hoped to take the stage. It was not to be.

Fundamentalist Christians play a cyclical role in the GOP: they are integral constituents in local, off-year elections, but have proven an unwelcome distraction when the party is in the national spotlight. While the Christian right helps the GOP organize and grow, party leaders like Republican National Committee chair Haley Barbour have determined that they cannot risk letting the fundamentalists lead. They have little leverage, since they have nowhere else to go. So, like minorities and unions in the Democratic Party, they are taken for granted and left to nurse their issues on the sideline.

You could see the clouds gathering before the convention had even started. At Pat Buchanan's final campaign rally, held the day before the convention began, the mood was hostile and suspicious. The crowd of 2,000, forced to meet not in San Diego but 30 miles north in Escondido, were Buchanan supporters first, Republicans second—and they wanted Pat to know. So when Oliver North, who mounted the podium to a standing ovation, urged Buchanan to return to the GOP fold and endorse Dole, the crowd turned on the Iran-Contra hero. "Never! Third party!" they screamed.

By the time Buchanan himself came up to speak, the faithful could smell a sellout in the air. Buchanan hit his





favorite targets—the United Nations, the World Bank, NAFTA—but it was his complacency that struck the crowd most. “America does not need a third party,” Buchanan argued, “America needs a fighting second party.” The audience filed out looking dazed and directionless. Their rally, which had begun as a last stand against compromise, ended with their leader walking in lockstep with the boys he had been denigrating for months.

Selling out the party faithful seemed to be the theme of the week. While Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed told CNN that the Dole-Kemp ticket was “everything we wanted,” his constituents—who made up a third of the convention delegates—were far from pacified. On Tuesday, the Republican Coalition for Life hosted its “Whale of a Party” at Sea World, drawing such luminaries as Phyllis Schlafly, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. As at the Buchanan rally, the crowd seemed confused and disappointed, as if their trip to the White House had been canceled at the last minute. Bob Dole’s campaign, it was becoming clear, did not include them. “We got the platform,” said Bill, a Missouri alternate delegate who didn’t offer his last name, “but nobody seems to care about putting it into action, or even in talking about it up on stage. The convention we’ve had so far is not the one we were fighting for.”

Susan Molinari, the convention’s keynote speaker and a lukewarm advocate of abortion rights, quickly became a lightning rod for the anti-abortion delegates, who complained that no one from their camp was there to balance the scales. “The problem is, if they’re going to have her, you need to have some other speakers too, such as Pat Buchanan and Alan Keyes,” Schlafly told reporters after Molinari’s speech.

Indeed, the GOP was not alone in shutting out the Chris-

tian right. The press too downplayed their presence, reporting the anti-Molinari sentiment only as a nonstory. “Rumors of a delegate walkout appeared unfounded,” NPR reported the next morning, even though several delegates had in fact stormed out with photographers in their wake.

The Christian right, of course, is only one half of the Guns ‘n’ God coalition that carried the GOP into Congress in 1994. The other is the gun lobby, as represented by the National Rifle Association and Buchanan supporter and militia sympathizer Larry Pratt’s even more militant Gun Owners of America. The NRA was all but invisible in San Diego; though they funded a few low-key events, they stayed far from the limelight. Gun Owners of America tried to fill the void with a yacht party on San Diego marina on Tuesday. If there was ever a time to feel sorry for Larry Pratt, it was at that party. Fewer than a dozen guests milled about on the massive catamaran rented for the occasion, while the platters of crab hors d’oeuvres melted in the sun.

Was the real, unheralded story of the convention the GOP’s abandonment of its extremist fringe for the moderate center? Of course not. In San Diego, the divisions between social conservatives and moderates were a diversion. As always, it was the party’s corporate interests who were calling the shots. From the nightly Texaco/Chevron/National Mining party for delegates to the goodie bags for journalists filled with Kraft macaroni and cheese, Budweiser mugs and Sprint phone cards (placement secured with a donation of no less than \$100,000), the big business delegation was omnipresent and omnipotent.

When Barbour suggested the convention be viewed as an example of the GOP’s vision of America, he was referring to the on-stage antics—the women, the minorities, the happy talk. But that vision was better demonstrated by the corpo-



rate boosterism that had built the stage.

No pork-barrel amendment or congressional junket could better illustrate corporate America's hold on the Republican Party than the convention itself. The list of donors who had given hundreds of thousands to underwrite the convention was a close approximation of the Fortune 500. Logos were everywhere: Microsoft hosted an exclusive luncheon, the National Roofing Contractors had a party, while Bell South provided a big dinner spread for reporters. Across the street from the hall, Chrysler rented a pavilion where Dole, Gingrich and Kemp put in appearances next to the new Dodge Viper. This may have been a delegates' convention, but it was American business making the contacts.

If any one factor made this exercise in bonhomie and good feelings look like a sure bet, it was the presence of Jack Kemp on the ticket. Crown prince of the supply siders, Kemp's star was ascendant in San Diego. His coterie of past and present hangers-on were transformed into minor celebrities with major clout. First among these was Steve Forbes, who had run as a Kemp surrogate in the GOP primaries. Though Forbes retreated from the campaign in March when his vision of undisguised corporate rule proved unpalatable even to GOP primary voters, Kemp's annointment put him back in circulation. At his every appearance on the convention floor, Forbes was surrounded by delegate-fans after autographs, while his chief of staff Bill Dal Col (who had been a Kemp staffer) stood to the side, talking stocks with an acquaintance.

With Kemp in the spotlight, the delegates were not the only ones who wanted to get to know Forbes. There he was again Wednesday night, having a power cocktail at the posh Doubletree Hotel bar with CNN journalists Wolf Blitzer and Frank Sesno. Here, being quietly laid, was the groundwork for a relationship between high-profile journalists and a possible treasury secretary.

The irrelevance of the much-disputed platform to the real business of the GOP was underlined by Dole's admission that he still hadn't actually read the thing. For the fiscally conservative, socially moderate voters whom the GOP will be counting on in November, Dole's strategy of benign neglect was just the thing to keep them in the party. But it left delegates largely in the dark about their presidential candidate's priorities.

Indeed, Dole seemed to do best in San Diego when he wasn't there at all. In the first few days, when the party could ignore their candidate and just look pretty on TV, the convention center hummed with optimism. But as the

week wore on, and the presence of Dole himself loomed ever larger, the mood grew edgier. Every time a speaker invoked Dole, extolling his character or proclaiming (in Arizona Senator John McCain's words) that Bob Dole "offers you leadership," the applause seemed more polite than captivated, as if the speaker had wandered off onto some tangent nobody had quite followed. Although Dole was, in principle, the reason all of them were there, these delegates still had little idea who their man was or just what he might be leading them toward.

On Thursday, Dole finally appeared. The crowd of delegates waited, poised to hear the party's future, as spelled out by a leader whose rise was more a matter of happenstance than history. Putting the culture war to the side for the moment, Dole emphasized the bread-and-butter issues of fiscal conservatism swathed in talk of personal integrity and traditional values. In his acceptance speech, penned by ghostwriter and sometime novelist Mark Helprin, Dole tried to put it all together, interweaving grandiloquent phrases like "which is more important, wealth or honor?" with programmatic policy talk about things like a 15 percent across-the-board tax cut.

Dole seemed intent on defining himself, but he could only reiterate what had confused everyone before. It may well be that "in politics, honorable compromise is no sin," but neither is it the most convincing route toward self-definition. "Who am I that stands before you?" Dole asked, then paused. The crowd waited. For a moment, the candidate seemed to be looking for the answer, too. ◀

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**HEALTH**

# Reining in HMOs

# W

hen Barbara J. Roberts started experiencing chest pains, shortness of breath, nausea and headaches in November, 1991, her daughter, Linda Ross, rushed her to the emergency room of a Riverside, Calif. hospital owned and operated by Kaiser Permanente, the nation's largest health maintenance organization (HMO), and waited. And waited, and waited, and waited.

Roberts sat in an examining room for four and a half hours until a physician finally saw her, and diagnosed a blood clot in her lungs. Then, because his shift was over, he went home. Two hours later, still waiting for treatment, Roberts, 61, died of a pulmonary embolism—the blood clot had traveled through her circulatory system and blocked the artery between her heart and lungs.

An arbitration panel later found that the physi-

cian who had examined Roberts chose not to administer an expensive anti-clotting drug, a decision that Ross argues stemmed from a health care system that financially rewards physicians who withhold expensive treatments. According to Kaiser senior counsel Trischa O'Hanlon, the hospital admits mistakes were made but denies contributing to Roberts' death.

For Ross, there is no doubt why her mother died. "My mother died because the hospital needed a bigger bottom line," says Ross. "The medication was there, on site, to prevent her death."

Around the country, at least 30 states have passed laws regulating the activities of health maintenance organizations. California, the state with the largest proportion of its population enrolled in HMOs—roughly 40 percent—is poised to go the furthest.

In November, California voters will decide in a referendum whether HMOs should be banned from imposing gag rules that limit

what doctors can tell patients about treatments, and from giving bonuses and financial incentives to doctors or nurses who withhold expensive treatments and tests from patients to boost corporate profits [see sidebar].

In what is now becoming a pattern on the left, the proponents of reform have splintered into two camps. Two competing initiatives are vying for voters' attention. While both initiatives propose many of the same reforms, the Patient Protection Act of 1996 includes strong enforcement provisions and new taxes to fund the act. This initiative, Proposition 216, is backed by the California Nurses Association, a union representing 25,000 registered nurses; Harvey Rosenfield, a public interest lawyer and author of Proposition 103, the landmark auto insurance reform adopted by California voters in 1988 that rolled back rates; and Ralph Nader. The competing initiative is the HMO Patient Rights Initiative, or Proposition 214. It is supported by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the largest union in California, and Neighbor to Neighbor, a coalition of consumer groups that support a Canadian-style health care system.

In the last two years in California, the left has failed to present a united front on a number of monumental issues. In the effort to defeat an anti-affirmative action initiative—paradoxically named the California Civil Rights Initiative—on the November ballot, one faction is focusing its message exclusively on how the measure will hinder women's progress in the working world, while the other is focusing on how affirmative action has benefited everyone. In 1994, the left splintered into two groups over Proposition 187, the initiative that cut off state benefits to immigrants. One coalition argued that while some reforms were needed to stem illegal immigration, this was not the way. Meanwhile,

*In California,  
two alliances  
of unions and  
consumer  
organizations  
push separate  
initiatives to  
regulate  
HMOs.*

By Nina Schuyler

another faction denied that any changes were needed.

In the effort to reform the HMO industry, the left tried to agree on one initiative but almost immediately ran into a disagreement over strategy. At issue was a dispute over how strong the enforcement mechanism should be. The SEIU initiative relies on existing agencies—the state Department of Corporations and the state Department of Health Services—to implement the reforms, yet it does not allocate any new funds to these entities to carry out the new responsibilities.

The CNA and Rosenfield complain that the Department of Corporations is hardly an ardent watchdog. The department is only now fighting to impose its first penalty against an HMO—a \$500,000 fine against FHP International Inc. for denying cancer treatment to one of its patients. “There is no point in passing a no-law law that is not effective and not enforceable,” says Nader of Proposition 214.

The CNA-backed initiative, on the other hand, calls for an independent Health Care Consumer Association, voluntarily funded by consumers, to serve as overseer of the industry. The association will have the authority to request and analyze data from HMOs and issue independent report cards on the quality of services provided by HMOs. “Right now, consumers do not have any information to evaluate quality,” says Kit Costello, president of CNA. “The other initiative does not provide for such reports.”

The CNA-backed initiative also sets up a public health and prevention service fund to keep open emergency trauma

care facilities. Funding comes from taxes on HMOs that downsize, restructure, close or reduce community health care services, or convert from nonprofit to for-profit entities. Excessive compensation packages for health care corporation executives would also be taxed to pay for the act.

The two sides also disagreed over a provision in Prop 214 that allows the measure to be overturned by a simple majority vote of the legislature. The CNA-backed proposition requires a two-thirds vote and stipulates that any changes must further the purposes of the initiative. “You use the initiative process in the first place because you can’t get what is needed from the legislature,” says Jamie Court, deputy campaign manager for Consumers for Quality Care and a colleague of Rosenfield. “Why allow the legislature to rewrite the initiative the morning after?”

But Robin Kane, a spokesperson for the SEIU-backed measure, defends the provision, stating it provides necessary flexibility. “We don’t want to lock in errors or changes in this rapidly changing industry that are negative to consumers,” she says.

At times, the dispute between the two factions has turned ugly. For instance, after CNA qualified its initiative for the ballot in April, the SEIU created something called the California Nurses Alliance, which happens to share the same acronym as the California Nurses Association. To the dismay of the California Nurses Association, the new group has sent direct mail to voters to solicit funds. “We think

they created it just to confuse people,” says the CNA’s Costello.

Rosenfield’s organization and the CNA argue that a conflict of interest is driving the SEIU’s actions. The union’s Local 250 represents approximately 40,000 health care workers in California, including nursing assistants, dieticians, lab technicians, food preparers and janitors. The local, Rosenfield and the CNA say, has benefited from HMO cost-cutting measures, since these unionized workers are slowly taking over many of the tasks that used to be done by registered nurses. According to the American Hospital Association, in 1995, the number of unlicensed health care workers in the nation’s hospitals grew faster than the number of registered nurses, primarily because unlicensed workers earn less than half the wages of registered nurses. In June, Local 250 negotiated a new contract with Kaiser in which food preparers now answer patient call lights. In exchange, Local 250 headed off possible lay-offs and was able to negoti-

## HMO Patient Rights Initiative

- Prohibits denial of medical care without written criteria and a second medical opinion.
- Bans any HMO gag rules that prevent doctors from telling patients about treatment options.
- Prohibits HMOs from firing doctors and nurses “without just cause.”
- Prohibits HMOs from offering bonuses to doctors for denying medical care.
- Requires staffing levels of nurses and other health care workers defined as safe by state health officials.
- Requires insurers to make criteria for denying treatment publicly available.

## Patient Protection Act of 1996

All of the above, plus:

- Imposes a 1 percent tax on the closing or merger of any hospital or health system. The funds go toward implementation of the act and to assist in maintaining essential community health services, including trauma centers and communicable disease control.
- Requires HMOs to demonstrate to the Department of Health Services under penalty of perjury the necessity for premium increases.
- Imposes a 2.5 percent income tax surcharge on HMO executive compensation in excess of \$2 million in any year.
- Creates an independent consumer association, voluntarily funded by consumers, to advocate on behalf of patients and publish report cards on the quality of services of HMOs and managed care plans.
- Prohibits mandatory arbitration of medical grievances as a condition of providing health coverage.



ate a wage increase and training for Fresno-based health care workers. "The SEIU is collaborating with HMOs like Kaiser in the deskilling of the workforce," says Court.

Robin Kane says CNA's claims are unfounded. "That sort of accusation is nothing that needs to be responded to," she says. Kane says the SEIU is backing Proposition 214 because it is likelier to attract more voters. Voters, she asserts, will not support an initiative that raises taxes and increases government bureaucracy. "Prop 216 talks about public health financing and taxes, taking on issues beyond HMO abuses," says Kane. "We think our initiative stands a much better chance of winning because ours does not create any new taxes or fees and is enforced through existing agencies."

Despite the internal struggle among progressives, the real threat to both initiatives is the HMO industry and business associations, which have pledged to spend "whatever it takes" to defeat both measures. "We think both initiatives will increase costs to employers and employees," says Allen Zarembek, vice president of the California Chamber of Commerce. "Both initiatives fail to improve access to health care, which we think is the public's concern. In fact, we think these measures will actually decrease access because they will increase costs."

Janet Maira, spokesperson for Taxpayers Against Higher Health Costs, concurs. "These initiatives are geared more toward securing health care workers' jobs than protecting patients," she says.

The opposition has hired Goddard Claussen/First Tuesday, the Sacramento, Calif.-based public relations firm that helped defeat President Clinton's 1994 health care proposal with a series of ads featuring Harry and Louise. The California Healthcare Committee on Issues, a lobbying group, has assessed all nonpublic hospitals \$10 per staffed bed to battle the initiative.

Yet if the left can set aside differences, there are enough damning facts to beat back the industry's assault. According to a 1995 survey by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, managed-care patients are 40 percent more likely to report problems receiving treatment, diagnostic tests and access to specialists. Even the Medical Board of California, which consists primarily of pro-business appointees of Governor Pete Wilson, warned in its April report of "alarmingly frequent" instances of HMOs "restricting medically necessary services." Current practices in the HMO industry have led to fat bottom lines: Total profits were up 26 percent from 1994 for all health systems in California, according to a recent report in *Modern Healthcare*, a national industry trade publication. And CEOs of the 71 largest HMOs received average compensation of \$7 million each in 1994.

Such statistics—and the growing number of Californians familiar with cases like Barbara Roberts—are producing a

groundswell of support for restrictions on HMOs. A February poll found that 74 percent of California voters approved of the CNA-backed measure. After pollsters read voters the counterarguments that the opposition is likely to present, there was still 71 percent approval. Reflecting the grass-



A nurse collects signatures for the Proposition 216.

roots support for reform, 40 percent of the 830,000 signatures gathered by the CNA were obtained by volunteers, rather than a paid signature organization. (The SEIU gathered 700,000 signatures, but did not track how many were collected by volunteers.)

Some proponents of the CNA initiative argue that the bigger the industry's budget to fight against the initiatives, the likelier the possibility of a public backlash. "For Prop 103, we had a \$2 million campaign," says Court of the auto insurance reform proposition. "The industry spent \$80 million and lost. The rule of thumb after 103 is that the more the industry spends, the greater chance they will lose because people know it's the industry spending."

Linda Ross ultimately sued Kaiser for wrongful death. She quickly discovered that according to her mother's HMO agreement, Ross was required to submit her claim to an arbitrator rather than a court, and the proceeding had to be held in private.

"We had to seek justice from the very people who were responsible for my mother's death," says Ross. Under the CNA-backed initiative, mandatory arbitration is banned, a fact that motivated Ross to personally collect 2,500 signatures to qualify the CNA-backed initiative for the ballot.

One day before the hearing in 1995, Kaiser admitted negligence. After a two-day hearing, the arbitration panel awarded Ross \$150,000. "The money doesn't change anything, no amount of money ever would," says Ross. "The initiative is my therapy to make my mother's death count for something."

Nina Schuyler is journalist based in San Francisco.

## NICARAGUA

# Rethinking the Sandinista legacy

**T**he presidential elections slated for this October offer little choice to the masses of Nicaraguans who dramatically made history in 1979, and again in 1990. The race is shaping up as a showdown between Daniel Ortega and Arnaldo Alemán—between the Sandinistas' so-called "orthodox wing" and the most anti-Sandinista of the 22 presidential candidates. Alemán's 30 percent lead over Ortega in the opinion polls is comfortable but still would not be enough to prevent a second round of voting, since the winning presidential candidate must take 45 percent of the vote for outright victory in the first round.

Alemán has built his political career around opposition to the Sandinistas. In the early 1980s, his medium-sized farm was confiscated because of his ties to the contras. He was jailed, briefly, and then went into exile in Miami. In 1990, Alemán ran for

*The presidential elections in October are not about revolution versus counter-revolution. That contest was decided long ago—in favor of the latter.*

By Elizabeth Dore

mayor of Managua with a single-issue platform—oust the Sandinistas—and won. Now he is the presidential candidate of the Liberal Alliance, which includes Somoza's National Liberal Party.

Alemán's lead derives as much from the fragmentation of his opposition as from his own popularity. The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) split in two a year ago, with Sergio Ramírez leading the break-away Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS), of which he is the presidential candidate. The difference between the two Sandinista parties is largely one of style, not substance. Yet Ramírez's wing seems to have little popular support. In yet another reflection of the fragmentation of the opposition, an attempt to form a centrist coalition capable of winning the presidency collapsed when the candidacy of Antonio Lacayo was disqualified because, as the son-in-law of President Violeta Chamorro, he is constitutionally barred from holding that office.

The campaign is still in its early stages, but so far it has focused more on personalities than policy. Alemán's strategy is to tarnish Ortega with the epithet "revolutionary" and to associate him with the military draft, economic mismanagement and corruption of the Sandinista era. The FSLN's campaign centers on depicting Alemán as a return to *Somocismo*, yet is virtually silent about the revolution.

Despite superficial appearances, this election is not about revolution versus counter-revolution. That issue was resolved, temporarily at least, a long time ago. On July 19, at a rally that simultaneously commemorated the 17th anniversary of the Sandinista seizure of state power and launched the FSLN's campaign, Ortega promised that should he win "there would be good relations with the United States." The presence of his running mate, vice-presidential candidate Juan Manuel Caldera, lent weight to Ortega's words. An opponent of the Sandinistas in their revolutionary years, Caldera declared at the rally that the Sandinistas stand for stability, economic growth and private property. In an interview in *Barricada*, the party newspaper, Caldera underlined his opposition to the politics the Sandinistas pursued while in power. He singled out the mixed economy, agrarian reform and nationalizations for criticism, stressing that Nicaragua needs stability to ensure a good business climate. Caldera puts things more bluntly than Ortega, Tomás Borge, Bayardo Arce and the other leaders of the orthodox wing of the party. But there is nothing to suggest that he is out of step with them. Quite the contrary; his presence on the ticket is just what they wanted.

The leaders of the FSLN have struggled to demonstrate that they have returned to the fold. Over the course of the revolution, the Sandinistas and Pope John Paul II, who has always been hostile to the left, were at odds. Tensions came

to a head during his visit to Nicaragua in 1983. The Pope was openly booed by Sandinistas when he refused to denounce contra atrocities. When he visited the country in February of this year, a banner extending Daniel Ortega's welcome and thanks festooned central Managua. In July, lest anyone question Daniel's faith, it still was flapping in the sultry breeze. And after the draw to determine the party's location on the ballot, *Barricada* rejoiced that the FSLN landed the twelfth column—"the number that represents the 12 apostles who followed Christ," it declared.

About matters less spiritual, the FSLN also stresses that it will not provoke disorder. Since 1990, the Chamorro government has faithfully followed the World Bank's neoliberal economic prescriptions—with dire consequences for most Nicaraguans. The U.N. Development Program recently classified Nicaragua as the second poorest country in the hemisphere. (Haiti is the poorest.) At the same time, the IMF complimented the government for creating an investment climate highly favorable to foreign capital. Companies are allowed to repatriate all of their profits and new laws allow 100 percent foreign ownership of most property. Yet rather than lambaste the government for its economic strategy, Ortega says that he would continue the present policy because Nicaragua needs, above all, foreign investment.

To some observers, especially those who followed the revolution from a distance, it may seem that the Sandinistas have changed their spots. But many Nicaraguans—in particular workers and peasants—see things differently. Certainly, their relationship with the Sandinista leadership cooled dramatically over the last eight years or so, but even in the early years of the revolution, tensions were palpable.

The uprising of 1977-79 that overthrew the Somoza dynasty, one of Latin America's most enduring family dictatorships, was a broad, multi-class movement that came together chaotically and often spontaneously. Under the last Somoza, repression permeated society to such an extent that the regime's base of support was reduced to the army, the U.S. government, and a small clique that benefited directly from the dynasty. While the Sandinistas sparked rebellion with their bold attacks on the regime, by 1978 they were not so much leading the revolutionary movement as struggling to keep up with the mass insurgency they had unleashed. Throughout the uprising, disparate class interests were held together by a single objective—to end dictatorship. Nicaragua had a popular revolution in the true sense of the term; more than making history, the Sandinista leaders were swept along by its current.

Endeavoring to perpetuate the broad alliance which defeated Somoza, the Sandinistas played one note: nationalism. Rather than analyzing Nicaragua in terms of classes, their politics rested on a dichotomy between the "majority" and the "minority." The former, mostly but not exclusively the poor of Nicaragua, were seen as patriots, but only if they supported the Sandinistas. If they did not, they were classed by the regime as traitors. Unlike the richer traitors,

most of whom waited out the revolution in Miami, many of the poor who opposed the Sandinistas took up arms to overthrow them.

A significant number of men and women from Nicaragua's traditional economic elite were members or allies of the FSLN. During the revolutionary years, top government jobs, including cabinet seats for finance, trade, industry and foreign affairs, were held by people from this group. Throughout the revolution, bourgeois patriots were more than tolerated, they were encouraged, so long as they exploited in the name of the Popular Sandinista Revolution.

The Sandinistas' ideological division of society into majority-minority, patriots and traitors, was confusing, especially to workers and peasants whose struggles for control over property accentuated class divisions. This framework was not, however, part of some Machiavellian ploy on the part of the Sandinistas to suppress class consciousness. Rather, the FSLN's essentially populist view of Nicaragua reflected social conditions in the country. Capitalist development was relatively recent, and the classes of modern society—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—were still in the making. In addition, the neocolonial relationship between the Somoza dynasty and the U.S. government gave the popular movement its profoundly nationalist and anti-imperialist character.

The multi-class alliance was already marked by instability during the insurrection; when the Sandinistas took power, it proved increasingly difficult to manage. When peasants and workers clashed with land and factory owners—whether patriots or traitors—the Sandinistas invoked national unity in an attempt to reconcile conflicting claims. Whereas nationalism had served a progressive purpose when Somoza ruled, after his defeat it became an obstacle to political debate. When class conflict threatened the precarious equilibrium of the New Nicaragua, the FSLN attempted to banish class politics.

At the outset of the revolution, the Sandinistas outlawed strikes and resisted peasants' militant demands for land to the tiller. Finally, in 1986, the government began to distribute land. But it came too late, only after the National Directorate was convinced that many peasants threw in their lot with the contras because the FSLN reneged on earlier promises to give out land. For sins of commission and omission, the FSLN leaders lost popular support over the years. In the eyes of many Nicaraguans, the gains of the revolution, such as distribution of land, were not so much granted by the Sandinistas, as won from them.

By 1990, the majority of the population believed that the aims of the revolution had been achieved; the dynasty was no more, and Nicaragua was independent from the United States. In seven years of warfare, the United States and its mercenaries—the contras—had been kept at bay, though at great sacrifice. Most people thought that while the contras would never be completely defeated, owing to continued support from the United States, they wouldn't tri-



umph either. Instead, low-intensity warfare would continue, endlessly claiming the lives of poor men and women, and devastating the economy. The Nicaraguan population stunned the world for a second time in little more than a decade and voted the Sandinistas out of power.

The election of Violeta Chamorro, the candidate groomed by the U.S. government, becomes more understandable once we recognize that the Sandinistas, in their quest for national unity, progressively depoliticized political life. The National Directorate's single-minded discourse about nationalism and national unity structured public debate, in as far as it occurred, along increasingly trivial lines.

Ironically, although the contra war took an alarming toll, U.S. intervention may have prolonged the life of the Sandinista government beyond its time. The contra war lent strength to the claim that nationalism remained the key issue. In the end, it was neither lack of imagination or political commitment that bound the Sandinistas to nationalism. Rather, it was their lack of a coherent class base, a feature common to anti-colonial struggles in countries where capitalism has only recently taken root.

In the first years of Chamorro's presidency, the government and the FSLN moved cautiously. Both feared that people might take up arms again; many did, but armed struggle was largely confined to the remote northern and central highlands where ex-contras and ex-Sandinistas were at the center of a volatile and often inseparable mix of peasants demanding land. Groups resisting widespread layoffs unleashed sporadic violence in the cities. Gradually, however, an emerging entente between the Sandinista leadership and the Chamorro government became apparent. It was sealed in 1993 when the army, still called the Sandinista Popular Army, fired on former comrades in Estelí who were protesting against government measures that reduced the standing army to one-fifth its former size. This demonstrated the military's loyalty to the new regime and was defended by the high command in the name of law and order.

At the heart of social conflict was property. The first issue was what form property would take: Would the government allow the nationalized sector and cooperatives to exist alongside private property, as under Sandinista rule? Or, was private ownership to have a monopoly on property in Nicaragua? Gradually, as the government—in consort with FSLN leaders—disarmed, literally and figuratively, what remained of the popular movements, that issue was resolved in favor of private property.

Next, a different but not unrelated conflict came to the fore. Who would own the land, the factories, the airlines, the banks—in short, the wealth in Nicaragua? The political elite debated whether property should be returned to its pre-revolutionary owners. Particularly controversial for its symbolic, if not actual, value was the clash over whether Sandinista leaders would be stripped of what they had personally appropriated in the infamous "piñata" of their final days.

While the bourgeoisie was united on the first point—private property—it was deeply divided on the second—

rightful owners. The Chamorro group attempted to avoid anything that would stir the elite ranks of the FSLN into opposition. The government re-fashioned the distribution of wealth not by fiat but by ad hoc arrangements, which were more difficult to discern—and to oppose. It let the market do the dirty work. Small farmers, many of them beneficiaries of agrarian reform, defaulted on debts and lost their land.

Other politicians, less willing to appease Sandinista leaders and less concerned about political stability, denounced the government for collaborating with the FSLN. Since 1990 those politicians have struggled to reverse the Sandinista property laws. Arnaldo Alemán is the most fanatical among them. Alemán calls for undoing not just the piñata, but all redistribution of property since 1979.

At stake in this election is neither private versus collective property, nor bourgeois versus people's power. Those issues were decided with little dissent among the political elite—including the Sandinistas—in the face of considerable popular resistance. The contest at hand will either institutionalize or dismantle once and for all a new "Sandinista" sector of Nicaragua's economic and political elite. In this struggle, Ortega represents the status quo, Alemán instability and change.

Elizabeth Dore is completing a book on Nicaraguan history. She teaches Latin American Studies at the University of Portsmouth in Great Britain.



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# I N P R I N T

## Whitewashing the religious right

By Frederick Clarkson

Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition, is a busy man. Between stage managing the Christian right's takeover of the Republican convention from a "war room" in San Diego and denying charges by the Federal Election Commission that the Christian Coalition is a de facto arm of the GOP, Reed has been increasingly prominent in the news. His new book, *Active Faith*, a partial and self-serving account of the origins and development of the Christian Coalition, should earn him a few more minutes of air time.

Since its founding in 1989 by televangelist Pat Robertson, the Christian Coalition has developed an extensive grass-roots network of church- and precinct-based organizations. The organization has achieved much of what it originally set out to do: It has systematically taken over the infrastructure of the Republican Party and recruited, groomed and elected conservative Christian candidates for office at all levels.

This success story takes up a good portion of *Active Faith*. But Reed does not simply chronicle the Christian Coalition's rise to prominence; he seeks to recast the organization as a moderate, mainstream political movement, downplaying the image, so widespread in recent years, of a militant Christian right on the march. The book resembles nothing so much as an extended public relations exercise, with Reed, the babyfaced 34-year-old political wunderkind, serving as flack-in-chief for the religious right.

But it's hard to dress up the Christian right's image without confronting the real sins, past and present, of Christian conservatives. On the subject of race relations Reed allows, "We must do more. The sad record of religious conservatives on race gives liberals reason to hurl charges of bigotry

and intolerance at us." With disarming candor, he acknowledges that the Christian right has "blind spots on issues ranging from anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism to racial injustice, [and] liberals have been correct throughout history on issues of social justice while we have been neglectful or derelict in applying the principles of our faith to establishing justice in a fallen world. When it came to racism, where were the conservative evangelicals? They were not only on the sidelines, but on the wrong side of the most central cause of social justice in this century."

Reed is sometimes capable of such remarkable words, but one always senses the political calculation behind them. When Reed ruefully acknowledges the moral failures of white evangelicals, he seems less remorseful than regretful that the Christian right "has had a difficult time achieving moral resonance in the broader society" as a result. Then he insists, as if making amends, that the Christian Coalition, the Promise Keepers and other "pro-family groups" are reaching out to racial minorities. At times, he seems to fancy the Christian right as heir to the civil rights movement.

Reed's conciliatory posturing and lofty declarations, however, can't conceal his organization's legacy of bigotry. Consider the case of Reed's boss, Pat Robertson. Robertson's 1991 book, *The New World Order*, is a grab-bag of demonology and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. As the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) noted in a book-length report on the religious right, "*The New World Order* could be dismissed as largely harmless kookery" were it not for Robertson's real political influence (and a print run of half a million copies). Quite understandably, Reed treats his boss' ravings gingerly. Reed may be the Christian Coalition's media star, but Robertson is its founder, funder and unquestioned leader.

In his defense of Robertson, Reed quibbles with some factual errors in the ADL report but ignores most of the substance of the study. He ignores, for example, the role of Robertson's longtime associate, the Rev. Billy McCormack, one of only four directors of the Christian Coalition. McCormack supported former Klansman and neo-Nazi David Duke in his 1992 Louisiana gubernatorial campaign. The GOP's "big tent" allowed McCor-



### ACTIVE FAITH

HOW CHRISTIANS  
ARE CHANGING THE SOUL  
OF AMERICAN POLITICS

Active Faith  
By Ralph Reed  
The Free Press  
311 pp., \$25.00

mack to serve as a co-chair for the Bush campaign in Louisiana that year, even though his ties to Duke were public knowledge. McCormack even sat at Bush's right hand when the president attended a Christian Coalition conference at Robertson's campaign headquarters.

Reed also attempts to distance the Christian Coalition from the Christian Reconstructionist movement, which advocates a harsh theocracy governed by "Biblical law," where heresy, blasphemy, adultery and homosexuality would be treated as capital crimes. Reed dismisses Reconstructionism as an "authoritarian ideology that threatens the most basic civil liberties of a free and democratic society." Maybe so, but that hasn't stopped Reconstructionists from serving on the faculty of Robertson's Regent University and Reconstructionist texts from being used in its classes. And while Reed asserts that Christian conservatives "tolerate" the sin of homosexuality, just as they tolerate divorce and other "sins," the Christian Coalition promotes and sells a book by Reconstructionist authors George Grant and Mark Horne, *Legislating Immorality: The Homosexual Movement Comes Out Of The Closet*, which advocates the death penalty for homosexuality.

Anxious to smooth over the Christian Coalition's rough edges, Reed denounces gay-bashing by Falwell and other conservatives as offensive to civil discourse and Christian values, and shows little sign of traditional bigotry. His own spleen is mostly directed at "liberals." Contemporary liberals, he argues, have abandoned religious faith and expression and thus ceded the struggle for social justice to the conservative movement (which, of course, has God on its side). Paraphrasing Yale law professor Stephen Carter, on whose book *The Culture of Disbelief* he relies heavily, Reed blames abortion for the supposed abandonment by liberals of religious-based social justice work, and for the secularization of society. "[A]bortion," writes Reed, "played a central role in marginalizing the voice of faith in our political discourse, helping to create a culture of disbelief." As liberals, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton come under attack. Their Christian beliefs—both Carter and Clinton are Southern Baptists—were, Reed suggests, merely convenient political expedients to "mask their retreat" from "traditional values."

Reed's attempt to merge the religious right into mainstream conservatism hits one major snag, however. Most Christian right leaders, including Robertson, assert that the United States was once and should again be a "Christian nation." Reed insists that this invocation of America as a Christian nation is "rarely intended to imply a theocracy." But to see how misleading this claim is, one need look no farther than *The New World Order*, in which Robertson commends the theocratic Massachusetts Bay Colony as a model

of Christian governance. Reed—like a latter-day Marlin Fitzwater trying to tug his boss' foot out of his mouth—is left to explain that "religious leaders" really mean to "celebrate a nation in which people loved their neighbors, cared for those less fortunate, honored God, took care of their families, and obeyed the law."

Recalling his most notorious damage-control operation, Reed recounts in his book how he addressed the Anti-Defamation League and "acknowledged that religious conservatives had at times been insensitive, particularly in their call for a Christian nation, to the horrors experienced by the Jewish people. I called for an America that is not officially Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, where the separation of church and state is complete and inviolable." Reed relates this story but conveniently ignores Pat Robertson's withering attacks on the constitutional doctrine of separation of church and state. Nor does he mention Christian historical revisionist David Barton, a frequent speaker at Christian Coalition events who contends that the separation of church and state is a "myth." Thanks to the Coalition, Barton also served on the GOP platform committee in San Diego as a delegate from Texas.

The internal contradictions that plague *Active Faith* suggest parallel rifts emerging in the Christian right and the Republican Party. Zealots of both camps have contributed decisively to a new conservative establishment in American politics, but they also pose a threat to its survival. Just as Republican congressional leaders brought the party's freshman firebrands to heel after last year's budget debacle, GOP convention managers showed their determination not to sacrifice the party's electoral prospects to the intemperate demands of its Christian soldiers. Similarly, Reed—a fair-haired boy of the new Beltway establishment and a willing accomplice in the San Diego charade—understands that his wagon is hitched to the GOP star. As long as that's the case, he'll have to keep his colleagues and constituents on a short leash. ◀

**Frederick Clarkson** is the author of *Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy*, forthcoming from Common Courage Press.

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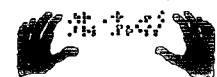
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*Continued from page 40*

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Clearly, the dreamlike unreality of this year's convention left the "network crybabies" (as Republican spin doctors called them last week) mute, or worse, enlisted them to help sustain the GOP's illusion of openness and inclusion. For example, all Big Three network executive producers admitted afterwards that they had picked out as many black and Asian faces as possible for reaction shots during speeches that addressed racial or immigration issues. It's always been standard practice in TV journalism to illustrate abstractions with pictures. But, said the producers, it never occurred to them that those images gave a misleading impression of the overwhelmingly pale 'n' male makeup of the delegates.

Contrast that with the way Maher's "roving correspondent," black comedian Chris Rock, described what it was like to be on the floor of the convention Monday night: Rock said he felt like he was at the "Million White Boy March." He offered to help the party out by wandering around for a while, because "they're running out of black people to put on television."

The ironies of human fantasy, commercial and otherwise, are a staple of stand-up comedy. But they are beyond the reach of the corporate media, who are themselves caught up in the hocus-pocus of stagecraft, audience formation and the mystical manufacture of a simulated reality. Faced with former Reagan advance man Michael Deaver's minutely worked out set of cues and camera angles—complete with time charts allowing for anchor buffers and commercial breaks—the media stars' reflexive response was to stand on the tape marker and play the guest part.

Besides, a professional doesn't sit in somebody else's Green Room and then go on air and insult him, or step on his lines. It just isn't done. No nattering nabobs of negativism ever get on "This Week with David Brinkley."

Certainly, what happened at the podium in San Diego was not politics as we know it. It was television—not very good television, maybe, but recognizably the same medium Aaron Spelling works in.

Deaver's overall thematic structure was, as it turned out, strangely misshapen by his constant need to reaffirm his own mastery. The first night featured a much-ballyhooped video tribute to Ronald Reagan (which turned out to have no new footage of a slack-jawed, Alzheimered Gipper, as ABC and NBC, both of which carried the film in its entirety, claimed they were led to expect) and a supposedly stirring and iconoclastic address by former Gen. Colin Powell. The tone was deliberately nostalgic and inspirational, emphasizing moderation and bedrock American values—a Gas-X tablet meant to soothe any lingering indigestion from Pat Buchanan's spicy "culture war" speech in '92.

As imagery, Monday was pleasant enough, but there was something strangely anachronistic about it. It was as if there

had been no trillion-dollar Reagan deficit, no Perot, no Gingrich revolution—just Ronnie, as filtered through Deaver's Budweiser-colored memories. Audiences liked it only a little better than the History Channel, giving the Monday show a piddling 4.7 Nielsen rating; a rerun of "Home Improvement" scored 11.7. The fraction of American TV sets tuned in to the GOP convention dropped to less than one-fourth this year from about one-third on the opening night in 1992. (That figure stayed pretty much unchanged for the rest of the week, with only a marginal uptick for Dole's hour-long acceptance speech.)

Tuesday night was a focus-group disaster, with the skeletons buried the first night nearly being dug up. The highlights were Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson's name-calling attack on the Clinton record, which turned off many by its strained nastiness, and Good Negro J.C. Watts' call for "personal responsibility," which sounded a tad too squeaky for modern America. But Wednesday was Bob Dole the Human night, the answer to Bill Clinton's "I still believe in a place called Hope" film at the 1992 Democratic convention. And it was a piece of work.

The evening began with testimonials from a crippled New York policeman and a Paralympian, both effective symbols of Dole's determined recovery from the maiming he suffered in World War II and of his authorship of the profoundly liberal Americans with Disabilities Act. But what everyone will remember was Elizabeth Dole's smooth performance wearing a body mike among the delegates on the convention floor, interviewing people from Bob Dole's past and personalizing "the man I love." The pros recognized one of their own. Dan Rather gushed, "It was not so much Oprah Winfrey as 'My Fair Liddy.'"

Elizabeth Dole's performance was the one true technical advance the Republicans managed in San Diego, but it was enough to reassert the party's claim to marketing savvy. Never mind that Liddy's heavily rehearsed act was, in fact, only a marginal improvement on Bill Clinton's remarkable performance during the studio call-in debate of '92, when he roamed the stage like Jerry Springer, connecting with questioners, while George Bush looked at his watch. It worked. The "man I love" line became one of the most replayed soundbites from the convention, its echo of tabloid romance sending ripples of recognition through an audience far larger than the covey of wonkn-ers glued to CNN and MSNBC.

By the time a mostly unsmiling Bob Dole gave the speech of his life, it didn't matter that he seemed forbidding and stiff, or the speech disjointed and mean. That was just Bob Dole's way. He wasn't "A Bitter Man for a Bitter America." He was the man My Fair Liddy loved, the man a suddenly Jimmy Olson-ish Jack Kemp looked up to as a hero. He was a small-town boy made good who was going to build Star Wars, cut the deficit, and reduce taxes 15 percent across the board. He got his bounce.

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# Made for TV

By Dan Bischoff



**W**e may well remember the Republican convention in San Diego by Ted Koppel's departure and Comedy Central's arrival.

Koppel's weary sign-off midway through the GOP rally—pulling up stakes and heading back to Washington to cover more dripping wreckage from TWA Flight 800, because “this convention is more of an infomercial than a news event”—became one of the few actual news events of the week. You could hear members of the 15,000-strong media corps talking about it for days, like grade-school kids gossiping about the brain who corrected his teacher's arithmetic and then went home to work on his Web site. “Did you hear about Ted Koppel?” they'd say, still stuck in study hall with the slow learners. “Is he smart or what?”

Bill Maher, on the other hand, thrived in the GOP mulch of tightly stage-managed nothingness. A stand-up comic and host of Comedy Central's phenomenally popular chat show *Politically Incorrect* (slated to move into the time slot following ABC's *Nightline* right after election day), Maher is a master of the deadpan doubletake, a boomer Jack Benny.

When he raises his eyebrow that crucial half-inch, even the most robotic Republican has to laugh or else, God forbid, seem uncool. Where else during convention week but on P.I. could you hear former Reagan speechwriter and current fourth-term Congressman Dana Rohrabacher say, “Listen, I did everything but drink the bong water when I was young”? Not from the podium, even when confessed pot “experimenter” Susan Molinari delivered her keynote. And certainly not in any of the respectful little interviews with over-rehearsed politicians in the network skyboxes.

The reason traditional TV journalists failed and *Politically Incorrect* succeeded in covering San Diego is simple: Any sincere analysis of the four-day campaign commercial would have had to probe the half-truths and demi-lies that are the essence of commercial speech, and that is the one thing TV journalists never do. After all, the list of \$100,000-plus corporate sponsors of the Republican convention—General Motors, Phillip Morris, Archer Daniels Midland, etc.—reads an awful lot like a list of leading corporate TV

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